

22 January 2021

TO ALL FAMILIES

Dear Families,

I am writing with a couple of updates for you regarding the school's response to Coronavirus.

We are finding our stride with managing online learning and face to face teaching for pupils and students attending. We will be capturing feedback on remote learning specifically in the coming week so that we can refine our offer, making small beneficial adjustments for all.

Thank you to those of you who took the time to share your thoughts and feelings about what continued attendance at school or access to remote learning means to you as families. These stories were shared with staff this morning as part of our INSET day. Staff were overwhelmed by the kind words of appreciation and touched and humbled by your stories about how challenging the lockdowns have been. A strong sense of community and purpose in being able to help was felt by all.

A request to all families

Despite the good news that infection rates are dropping, many families are continuing to choose home learning as a result of concerns in relation to the continued high prevalence of the virus locally and nationally. Some families are also choosing for their child to access school on a part time basis due to their child's current increased anxiety, which we are very happy to arrange. It is great to see many pupils and students - around half - are also on site accessing the full time offer.

With this in mind, I must request that families help us to ensure our provisions can run as smoothly as possible. You can help by giving notice if you intend to change the arrangements currently in place for your child if they are remote learning or coming in part time. We may need to make changes to staff working arrangements (such as bubbles) as a result of this and may not be able to accommodate the request immediately. Late notice or no notice changes can be destabilising for pupils and students as we may not be able to adequately prepare them. For keyworker families, you will have shared your shift patterns in advance if they are changeable.

Testing update

During this week and last, many of our amazing Year 7 to 14 pupils and students will have been tested for Covid-19 twice using the lateral flow tests provided by the Government for schools. You may be aware that there has been much debate about these tests and their reliability. As a SEN setting, testing poses many challenges for pupils and students.

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This week, the Government has announced that schools should cease daily testing for pupils and students. This means we will no longer be testing pupils and students in the event of a positive case being identified. Instead, we will continue to isolate individuals or groups who have been contacts of confirmed cases of coronavirus for a 10-day period, as was the arrangement in the Autumn term and continued into this term whilst testing was being established.

Testing will still take place for pupils and students in Year 7 – 14, who have already consented, upon return to school following a period of absence (more information is being sought from Public Health England and the Department for Education on what this means specifically). Staff testing will increase from once weekly to twice weekly.

As ever, please do get in touch if you would like to discuss any of these matters further or have a query.

There's promise of a hint of snow this weekend, I hope there's enough for the children to play in, but not enough to stop you having fun in your bubbles outside. Have a lovely weekend.

Yours sincerely



Vicky Perry
Vice Principal