

Thursday 10th December 2020

Dear Parents and Carers

RE: Government announcement yesterday

Following the government announcement yesterday, I am confirming that we will continue with our published plans for **finishing the term on Friday 18th January**.

The announcement that teachers were being given an early holiday are misleading and incorrect. The 18th December would have to be taken as a training day. **The government are not closing schools early**. We see no benefit to children or parents in doing this. Some parents have asked if we can move to remote learning in the last few days, the government have made it clear that schools are unable to do this.

We plan our training day programme at the beginning of the academic year. We have used 3 days already this term out of the five that we have available. The fourth is on Monday 4th January. Having been planned, we have external speakers booked to work with teachers on developing teaching and learning techniques involving High Performance Learning. Our last training day is on Monday 12th April; this is an essential training day as it provides teachers, particularly in the secondary phase, an opportunity to plan effectively for the 'final push' in preparation for external exams in year 11 and 13.

What the government have said is this:

We recommend all schools ensure staff, parents and carers are aware of the following information and relevant arrangements regarding positive cases in the holidays:

- **Where a pupil or staff member tests positive for coronavirus (COVID-19), having developed symptoms more than 48 hours since being in school, the school should not be contacted. Parents and carers should follow contact tracing instructions provided by NHS Test and Trace.**
- **For the first 6 days after teaching ends, if a pupil or staff member tests positive for coronavirus (COVID-19), having developed symptoms within 48 hours of being in school, the school is asked to assist in identifying close contacts and advising self-isolation, as the individual may have been infectious whilst in school.**
- **School staff are not asked to remain on-call or conduct any contact tracing more than 6 days after the final day of teaching. Where a school's last teaching day is on Thursday 17 December, there should be no pupil contact tracing beyond Wednesday 23 December.**

I am now planning to have staff on duty for 6 days after the 18th December. (I had originally planned for this to be happening until the 22nd December but have extended this.) It is very

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Principal: David James **Vice Principals:** Andrew Fisher Katherine Patterson Gary Wakefield

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important that you realise that **you will only need to inform us if your child develops symptoms 48 hours from their last day in school and then tests positive. For children who are at school on Friday 18th this would mean showing symptoms by 1.00 pm on Sunday 20th December and then testing positive.**

Please be aware that if this were to happen, we will have to identify the close contacts and inform of the need to self-isolate. I do realise that this could mean isolating over the Christmas period.

Government guidance is as follows and I will co-ordinate a plan to fit with this:

For the first 6 days after the end of term, schools are not asked to be on-call at all times. Staff responsible for contact tracing may designate a limited period in the day to receive notification of positive cases and advise close contacts to self-isolate (this can be done by text or email). The Department for Education coronavirus (COVID-19) helpline and PHE advice service are available to support with any queries you have about positive cases in your school.

I have written to you previously to explain how contact tracing works in schools. It has limitations and it is designed to protect a school from having to close due to a COVID-19 outbreak. Although we have measures in place to reduce close contact, we have found that students in key stage 3 classes are spending more time indoors at break and lunchtime. This means that when there is a positive case in a class group, it is likely that the whole class would need to isolate as it is impossible to identify if there has been close contact as defined as:

- a person who has had face-to-face contact (within one metre), with someone who has tested positive for COVID-19, including:
 - being coughed on
 - having a face-to-face conversation within one metre
 - having skin-to-skin physical contact, or
 - contact within one metre for one minute or longer without face-to-face contact
- a person who has been within 2 metres of someone who has tested positive for COVID-19 for more than 15 minutes

We will continue to use seating plans to identify close contacts in key stage 4 and 5.

In Primary, children are in class groups but in some situations it may be the year group that have to isolate.

The positive news is that we have done a pretty good job in terms of limiting COVID-19 cases. In total, since we returned in September, we have had 20 students who have had a positive Covid-19 result, all in secondary phase and none in primary. There have been three members of staff who have tested positive in this time. This does show that our control measures are robust and that our decisions to isolate have been effective.

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It is important, however, that we do not become complacent.

I can assure you, the thought of having to contact any parents after the 18th December is not something that I relish. I would like to reinforce the importance of following control measures. There are several students who walk to school in large groups and if any of this group were to contract Covid-19 then they would all be identified as a close contact. It is important that you, and they, realise that **being outside does not make a difference.**

I would like to thank you for your continued support. We have had several parents who have taken the time to thank us for the work that we have done in keeping the school open and safe for their children. I really do appreciate this and the team that I have been working with have done a fantastic job this term.

I will confirm early next week how our reporting system will operate from Saturday 19th December.

Kind regards



Gary Wakefield
Vice Principal