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To: All Parents/Carers

Our Ref: 060122

6 January 2022

Dear Parent/Carer

We are writing to you to update you on how our schools are responding to the surge in Covid-19 cases both nationally and locally and the plans we are putting in place to try to keep things as normal as possible for our students.

We know that all students need to be in school and to be taught in classrooms, with as many of the usual school activities going on as possible. Young people across the country have faced too much disruption over the last two years and we are determined to do everything in our power to minimise further disruption.

The biggest challenge all schools across the country face, including our own, is the potential impact of staff shortages caused when staff are required to isolate if they test positive for Covid-19. At the moment, although all our schools have some staff absent through isolation, we can operate normally, albeit with higher levels of cover than we would ideally like. We are aware though, that the situation is likely to become more difficult over the next few weeks, so we want to share with you what we will be doing, if necessary, to keep our schools going and continue to offer the best possible education to all our young people.

When a teacher is absent we will, in the first instance, try to cover classes using either our own pool of cover supervisors and cover teachers or using external supply teachers. We are sure you are aware though, that availability of external supply teachers is extremely limited at the moment as teacher absence locally and nationally is extremely high. It is likely that from time to time over the next few weeks, your child may have some lessons with a teacher other than their usual teacher. Please be assured that we will do everything we can to ensure that classes in secondary schools are led by subject specialists and we must prioritise classes that are taking external exams this summer.

If staff absence reaches a level that makes the normal operation of school impossible, we will not immediately send students home to work remotely. Instead, we will try to keep students in school. In this event, some groups may be combined for a period of time while we try to bring in additional staff and re-timetable the day. Please note that this is dependent on a school having large enough spaces with adequate ventilation to do this safely.

As a final resort, if any school simply ends up without enough staff to operate safely, we would have no alternative but to ask some students to work remotely from home for a short period of time. In this event, lessons would be delivered “live” using Microsoft Teams, in the same way they were during the second national lockdown from January to March 2021. Please be assured that this really would only be used as a last resort when all other possibilities have been exhausted.

As we are sure you appreciate, this is a rapidly changing situation and we could move very quickly from normal operations to a really difficult situation. We will do our absolute best to keep you fully informed of the situation if and when it changes.



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The other risk to normal operation would be exceptionally high levels of student absence and we ask you to support us in trying to minimise the spread of Covid-19 between young people in our communities. We ask students in secondary schools to wear a mask, if they are not exempt, in classrooms and communal areas in line with the latest guidance from the Department for Education. This is a temporary measure, which will be reviewed shortly. We encourage all students to take at least two lateral flow tests each week and we will continue to provide test kits as long as our schools have stock.

We hope this letter is helpful in explaining what we are doing to try to keep our schools operating as normally as possible and to keep students in school and learning face to face. Staff and leaders are working very hard and we are grateful for everything they are doing. We will continue to keep you informed should the situation in any of our schools change significantly and we thank you for your continued support.

Yours faithfully

Jonny Uttley
CEO

Richard Williman
Headteacher