Monday 18th January 2021

Dear Parents & Carers

Once again we have found ourselves having to cope with another Lockdown where schools have had to make adjustments to ensure all pupils can access learning, whilst still adhering to the wider lockdown guidance and playing our part in keeping pupils, staff and the wider community safe!

We cannot thank you enough for the part that you have played in supporting us to do that. By closing the school, on what should have been the first day back, teachers were able to consult with all our families and discuss and negotiate provision for your child. This time we have been able to keep pupils, in their usual class with familiar staff which allows teachers to continue with targeted teaching and learning. By reducing class sizes we have been able to ensure the safety of our school community and tighten up the ‘bubbles’ and decrease mixing between teams. We continue to follow our systems of protective measures to manage and control any risks.

We are very aware that these are difficult and worrying times and there continues to be great anxiety across the whole community and country, with COVID rates remaining high nationally. Some of you have had to make difficult decisions to keep your child at home. We are here to support you and you all will continue to be contacted regularly by members of staff, from your child’s class. Jayne Duke is always at the end of the phone should you need to talk. Whatever your child’s level of contact with school may be staff will be providing support and suitable remote learning, in the most appropriate form for your child.

Where parents wish for their child to be absent or a young person chooses not to attend, the Departmental guidance is clear that all leaves of absence will be granted and families will not be penalised.

You will have heard through the media that the government is delivering a programme of rapid asymptomatic testing in the first half of the Spring term for children and young people in year 7 and above (or equivalent) and school staff, as a supportive measure to try and reduce the risk of infection spreading in schools. For special schools this means that all staff and where appropriate all secondary aged pupils will be offered the test weekly.

This will help to identify asymptomatic positive cases and break the chains of transmission of coronavirus. This is particularly important in special schools and specialist colleges, where the education and care provided often involves close proximity between children or young people and staff and social distancing can be harder to observe.

This has not been something that we were able to offer without allowing ourselves time to ensure that we could implement this procedure safely and effectively. It has involved selecting and training staff/volunteers to deliver the testing programme. We are now at the stage where we feel ready to test school staff and this will commence this week. We have taken the decision to not test our senior age pupils at this time. You will be kept informed of any changes to this.

This will take staff members out of the classroom and may also mean that more staff test positive and you will need to be prepared for your child self-isolating if they are identified as a close contact.

Best Wishes

Alison Hall

Interim Headteacher