

24th November 2020

Ms J Palmer BSc, MA, MA, NPQH
Principal

Dear Parents and Carers

I am writing today with a COVID update and to answer frequently asked questions.

First off however, I would like to point out that Swale is the worst-hit area of England when it comes to COVID according to the BBC. Please see : <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-kent-55044408>

This means that we need to pull together more than ever so, for the safety of the entire school community, please ensure that you are wearing a mask when on the school premises and during drop off and pick up, please remain inside your cars.

UPDATE

As of today, we have approximately half of the school open and several classes operating four days per week. Unfortunately, this is due to numerous positive test results within the school community. Let's join together to wish all a speedy recovery with no long lasting effects. In addition, we have several members of staff who are at home for a variety of COVID related reasons, for example:

- A member of their household has tested positive
- Their child's school is closed so they must remain at home for childcare reasons
- They are exhibiting symptoms and are awaiting test results
- A member of their family are exhibiting symptoms and are awaiting test results

It is important that we take every opportunity to recognise the efforts of staff who are working very hard, under extremely challenging circumstances, to ensure pupils are safe, happy and engaged in learning. This is a very stressful time for us all and I am so inspired that staff, despite everything, are still doing their very best for the pupils of Meadowfield School.

I would also like to recognise those parents and carers who have shared kind words and have offered their support for difficult decisions that school has had to take. I find it disheartening that a small handful of parents have told us that they believe we not deploying staff properly, or reducing pupil days in school simply because we do not wish to look after our children and are sending children home unnecessarily. On the contrary, we are working very hard to ensure that we following the advice of the Department of Education, Public Health England and the Kent Health Protection Team. I liaise regularly with other Kent Special Schools and Kent County Council to ensure our practice is consistent with other schools throughout the county. The last thing we want to do is to close a class or bubble and we make sure we have the best COVID strategies in place, but there are many factors out of our control.

I will continue to keep you updated and please, should you have any questions or concerns, contact the school office. We are here to help. I would also like to ask that negative discussion on social media be eliminated as that ultimately makes our work much more difficult and causes needless concern and distress to other parents/carers, pupils and staff.

Continued./...

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Why can you not deliver a hot meal?	For those families who receive free school meals, we are providing vouchers. We simply do not have the resources to distribute hot meals and we wish to give families more flexibility by issuing vouchers.
Why do you offer a packed lunch for 1 day absence and not a voucher?	The minimum voucher order is £5:00 and a FSM for 1 day is £2:30. The school does not have the budget to support £5:00 per day and therefore a packed lunch can be collected from the school.
Why do we have to wait for vouchers?	This is because orders for vouchers must be placed once we know how many vouchers are required. We do not have a bank of vouchers ready for immediate use but we do endeavour to order then distribute vouchers as quickly as possible. There is clear guidance when vouchers are to be issued.
You are sending out Morrison's vouchers but I do not shop there. Can I have vouchers for a different shop?	For practical reasons, all vouchers will be for Morrison's. There is a Morrison's both in Sittingbourne and on the Isle of Sheppey. Vouchers can also be spent online.
Why do you close entire bubbles?	Individual class bubbles make up part of a larger corridor bubble. If an individual tests positive in a corridor, then the entire corridor bubble needs to close. For the most part, class staff work within their class. However, staff may support pupils from different classes WITHIN THEIR CORRIDOR BUBBLE during arrival, departure, lunchtime and playtimes.
What is the name of the person who has tested positive? Has my child been near this person?	As per government guidelines, we are not allowed to share the name or any details of those who test positive for COVID. We can never 100% account for every single member of staff that has been in contact with a child on a daily basis (see previous answer).
Why can you not close the school to everyone except key workers?	We are required by the government to be open for all pupils. Unfortunately, we have to close bubbles when a COVID test is positive or if there are too many COVID related staff absences to ensure the safety of pupils.
Why have you sent my child home? I do not think he/she is unwell.	Pupils must be sent home if they exhibit any COVID symptoms and these include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A high temperature • A new, continuous cough • A loss or change to the sense of smell or taste All staff are aware of the symptoms to look out for and we must follow government guidance without exception for the safety of everyone within the school community.

Continued./...

Can I send my child to respite if they are isolating?	No – isolation means <u>staying at home</u> and not leaving the house for 14 days.
Can I send my child into school when another family member is isolating or has tested positive?	No – this presents a great risk to staff and pupils in school. A household must isolate together when any member of a ‘household bubble’ has symptoms or has tested positive.
Can you guarantee that my child is safe in school?	Meadowfield School has a very thorough risk assessment and all staff follow COVID secure measures. However, there can never be a guarantee that a pupil will not be exposed to the virus while in school.
Why am I not receiving information about COVID?	<p>Please ensure you are signed up to Parentmail and that your details are up to date on the system.</p> <p>Very Important: If you change your email or telephone number you must log-in on Parentmail and amend your details, the office staff cannot amend parent/carer details on Parentmail as they private via a log-in to you. If you do not amend your information the system will continue to send letters and updates to your old contact details.</p> <p>By using Parentmail, you can be sure of receiving COVID updates. Should you require any assistance, please contact the school office.</p>

I will update you again soon and in the meantime if you have any questions or concerns, please contact me via the school office, office@meadowfield.kent.sch.uk

I would also like to send my best wishes for the health and safety of you and your families.

Yours faithfully



Jill Palmer
Principal
Meadowfield School