

3<sup>rd</sup> January 2022

Dear Parents and Carers

I hope that you and your families have had a peaceful holiday and on behalf of the Leadership Group, I would like to extend Happy New Year wishes.

You will no doubt be aware that there continues to be a surge in Covid infections throughout the country. These increasing infections will further affect schools, including Meadowfield. Unfortunately, I have had emails from several members of staff in recent days explaining that they have tested positive and this is likely to continue in the coming weeks. On the run up to Christmas the school was operating with up to 30% of staff absence and it is likely we will see such absences continue in January.

We will do our utmost to ensure that any interruptions to face to face learning is kept to a minimum, but it is distinctly possible that we will need to revert to rotas and/or online learning at some point.

Tomorrow, 4<sup>th</sup> January, we will be reassessing our staffing situation and will be able to make plans for the remainder of the week. We will, of course keep you updated, particularly as we review the latest government guidance and apply it to our Covid Risk Assessment.

**Should you feel uncertain about sending your child into school tomorrow, you may decide to keep your son or daughter at home until we can evaluate our situation and then inform you of our plans. If you decide to take this course of action, please can you contact the school office in the morning and advise the office team accordingly.**

Our number one priority will always be the safety of everyone within the school community and this includes ensuring that we have the adequate number of staff, with the appropriate training to meet the individual health, medical, behavioural and learning needs of every child and young person; whilst following the rules and guidance from the LA and DfE.

The latest guidance from the government states that all secondary school age pupils should complete a Lateral Flow Test prior to returning to school. However, we realise that this is not possible for all our pupils.

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The latest guidance from the government includes the following:

*Since Wednesday 22 December, the 10-day self-isolation period for people who record a positive PCR test result for COVID-19 has been reduced to 7 days in most circumstances, unless you cannot test for any reason.*

*Individuals may now take LFD tests on day 6 and day 7 of their self-isolation period. Those who receive two negative test results are no longer required to complete 10 full days of self-isolation. The first test must be taken no earlier than day 6 of the self-isolation period and tests must be taken 24 hours apart. This also applies to children under 5, with LFD testing at parental or guardian discretion. If both these test results are negative, and you do not have a high temperature, you may end your self-isolation after the second negative test result and return to your education setting from day 8.*

***Those who cannot test must complete their 10-day isolation.***

I have been asked questions from several parents and I would like to take this opportunity to reply to all:

**QUESTION:** Why are you not using agency staff to cover absence?

**REPLY:** For some classes and pupils, agency staff will never be appropriate as specialised training is required to meet the needs of the pupils. In addition, agencies are not able to supply the usual number of staff as infection rates have affected agencies as well, resulting in very limited staff available to cover.

**QUESTION:** Why can't Meadowfield staff get childcare for their own children, as opposed to taking time off?

**REPLY:** When a member of staff has a child who has tested positive or who has symptoms and is awaiting a test result, it is not appropriate for someone outside the home to look after them because of the risks of further spread of the virus.

**QUESTION:** Why can't you only stay open for key worker parents, and close to other families rather than using rotas and class closures?

**REPLY:** We are doing our best to ensure that face to face teaching is as equitable as possible across the school. Prioritising key workers was practised in the first lockdown, however we are now trying to meet the needs of our whole school population yet this is dependent upon adequate staffing.

**QUESTION:** Why are you not using staff from closed classes to cover other classes to stop further class closures or rotas?

**REPLY:** We are using the staff from closed classes to cover the classes that are open on the rota, which enabled the school to only close a class once during the week. The exception to this theory ie the week closures, was due to the infection rate in those particular classes.

Please can I remind everyone that masks must be worn at all times on the school premises, including in the car park.

Yours faithfully



Jill M Palmer, Principal



Please wear a face mask in the car park

