

18th December 2020

Dear Parents, Carers and Students

I continue to hope that you and those around you remain well and those in the very unfortunate position of testing positive for Covid-19 recover quickly. As we reach the end of Term 2 and the extraordinary year of 2020 reaches its conclusion, I wanted to provide one final end of Term letter to highlight a few important matters relating to our school.

Key messages in this letter:

- **End of Term planning for today**
- **Tier 2 Restrictions and the Christmas holiday period**
- **Covid Contact Tracing during the Christmas holiday period**
- **DfE announcement regarding the rollout of mass Covid testing in schools from January and a delayed start to Term 3**
- **Advanced notification of Canteen Price Increases 2021**
- **A reminder about Covid-19 Symptoms, Testing and Self Isolation**
- **Thank you and Merry Christmas**

End of Term planning for today

You have probably picked up in the news that for some schools in other parts of the country worse hit by virus transmission rates, remaining open this week in the context of this changeable climate was far from straightforward. School leaders in these areas were understandably anxious about the role of asymptomatic students transmitting the virus into homes, the possible need to ask pupils to isolate over the Christmas period combined with responsibility of all schools to be responsible for supporting track and trace in the holidays up until Christmas Eve.

In an effort to relieve some of the burdens and pressures on school leaders the DfE announced late last week that schools could make today, Friday 18 December an INSET day which could be delivered online, with the required lost teaching time /inset time being made up at another point in the academic year in 2021. Although I recognised the extra inset day would mean that I'm only then responsible for contact tracing up to and including the 23rd December instead of up to Christmas Eve, I thought it was unreasonable at such short notice to expect our families to rearrange their plans/any necessary childcare arrangements for today had I changed our plans.

Equally, I didn't think the reasons for closing a day earlier for students outweighed missing more time from school, especially when our last day of term 2 involves an altered day which centres around students having some fun with lessons/pastoral time having an end of term festive feel.

Tier 2 Restrictions and the Christmas holiday period

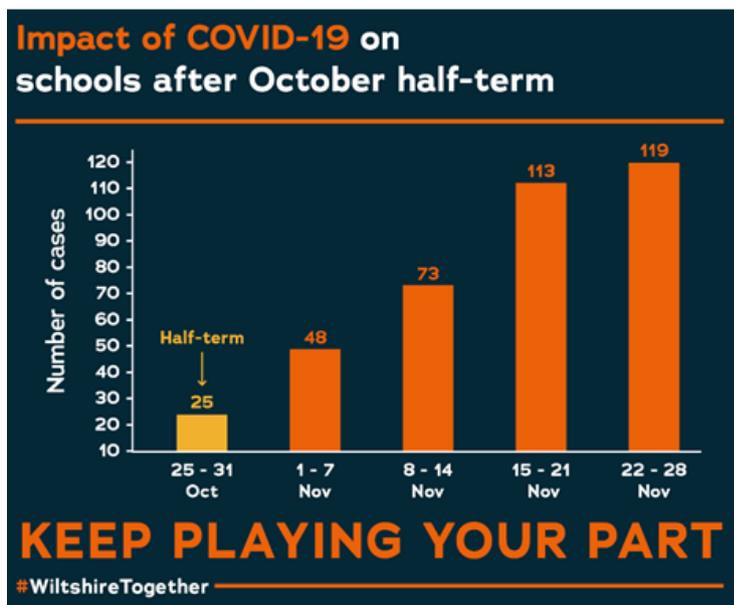


It was announced yesterday that Wiltshire remains in Tier 2: High Alert. As we head towards the Christmas period, which has the potential to bring about an increase in COVID-19 cases, Wiltshire Public Health have asked for my support in sharing some key messages with you as we all continue to play our part to keep transmission rates down in our community.

As you will no doubt know, the Government has confirmed that people can form a Christmas bubble between 23 – 27 December regardless of what Tier their local area is in (Wiltshire remains in Tier 2).

You can find more information here <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/making-a-christmas-bubble-with-friends-and-family/making-a-christmas-bubble-with-friends-and-family>

The Wiltshire Public Health graphic below shows the sharp rise of cases associated with schools/education settings after the October half-term break. In a number of these cases they were associated with mixed household sleepovers. This is something Wiltshire Public Health are desperate to avoid happening again.



We don't want to see case numbers surge in the New Year so we would be grateful if everyone associated with our school and our community can be cautious in how they form their Christmas bubble. We know it won't be a traditional Christmas for many of us, however, the actions we take now should really make a positive difference as we head towards 2021.



Covid Contact Tracing during the Christmas holiday period

As we near the holidays I wanted to clarify what you should do if your child tests positive for COVID-19 during the break.

Public Health have identified a 6 day window after the final day of teaching in which schools must be informed so we can assist with contact tracing should your child test positive for Covid-19 over the holiday period.

- 1) Parents/carers must continue to inform the school of confirmed student positive test cases if symptoms developed within 48 hours of last being in school (up to Sunday 20th December if they were in school on Friday 18th).
- 2) Parents/carers of pupils and who were not symptomatic but tested positive within 48 hours of last being in school (up to Sunday 20th December if they were in school on Friday 18th) also need to let the school know.

For example:

If a pupil was last in school on Friday 18 December:

- Develops Covid Symptoms on Sunday 20 December (within 48 hours of last being in school)
- Gets tested on Monday 21 December
- Receives a positive result on Wednesday 23 December
- Notifies us by email on 23 December.

The student will have been infectious while in school on Friday 18 December and we would need to contact Public Health who would carry out their risk assessment and potentially ask the year group bubble to self isolate.

- 3) Where a student tests positive for coronavirus (COVID-19), having developed symptoms more than 48 hours since last being in school (from Monday onwards if they were in school on Friday 18th), **the school does not need to be contacted.**

Parents and carers should follow contact tracing instructions provided by NHS Test and Trace.

If you need to inform the school of a student positive Covid-19 test result as per 1) and 2) above please email me at Rbell@corsham.wilts.sch.uk as all other telephone lines/inboxes will not be

monitored over the holiday period. If informing me of a positive case it would be really useful if you could include the following information within your email:

- Name of Child and Year Group
- Date of onset of COVID-19 symptoms (including what symptoms they had)
- Date of the Covid test
- Date of the Covid Test result (and evidence of the result/ID number)
- Date your child was last in school
- How do they get to school?
 - E.g. walk, cycle, car, public transport, school transport, taxi
 - If by car – do you car share with anyone else?
 - If public transport/school transport do they know who they sat near?

At the start of term in January you will need to continue to inform us if your child tests positive, is self-isolating or symptomatic and contact the school on Monday 4th January via Attendance@corsham.wilts.sch.uk and make sure your child self-isolates for the required number of days.



DfE announcements regarding the rollout of mass Covid testing in schools from January and a delayed start to Term 3

The government announced on Tuesday that secondary schools and colleges in England, as well as special schools and alternative provision, will have access to rapid coronavirus testing from January. This is a national rollout of a process that has been piloted in a number of areas over the last few weeks with the intention of further safeguarding the health of the teaching workforce and keeping as many staff and pupils in school and college as possible.

In practical terms it could mean we don't have to send a bubble year group home if there is a positive case and it will also help identify asymptomatic cases - which make up a third of all cases - limiting the spread of the virus.

Under this programme, all staff will be able to be take a lateral flow test weekly. Staff and pupils identified as close contacts of someone who has tested positive will be able to be tested daily. Anyone who agrees to be tested in this way will not need to self-isolate unless they themselves test positive.

Then, yesterday evening, there was a further announcement from the DfE stating that, linked to the introduction of mass testing, 'week commencing 4th January, secondary schools and colleges will

provide remote education to most pupils, only opening for face-to-face education for vulnerable children, children of critical workers and those in exam years.'

At the time of writing to you today, I still do not have the full detail of what the two latest announcements will mean for us. Specifically, which Year Groups I am allowed to welcome back in January and whether or not their attendance is reliant on participation in any new testing process. Frustratingly, the lack of clarity within the information provided in the last minutes of term mean I can't yet provide you with certainty or reassurance on both these matters. You, our parents and students, deserve better. Like many other Headteachers across the country, I await further guidance from the DfE in the coming days and I will communicate with you again once clarification has been received and I have been able to set out our plans. Please be assured that I remain committed to getting all children back into school as quickly as I am allowed to do so.

In the meantime, as I know the principle of mass testing will cause some parents concern, I can reassure you that participation in a test needs your consent and will not be compulsory as highlighted in the DfE's 'Mass testing in schools: Your questions answered' page accessed via the following link:

https://dfemedia.blog.gov.uk/2020/12/15/mass-testing-in-schools-your-questions-answered/?utm_medium=email&utm_source=govdelivery

Advanced notification of Canteen Price Increases 2021

Unfortunately, our catering contractor Chartwells have given us advanced warning of Canteen price increases in 2021 which is mainly due to food and Labour inflation costs. Additionally, on the 1st January 2021, the transition period between the EU and the UK will end and from this point there may be additional food costs related to Brexit. Chartwells are implementing contingency plans to minimise these costs.

A reminder about Covid-19 Symptoms, Testing, Self Isolation and Test & Trace

A reminder that it is essential that students self-isolate at home and book a coronavirus test if they develop one or more of the main coronavirus symptoms:

- a high temperature
- a new continuous cough
- the loss or change of their sense of taste or smell

Testing can be arranged via <https://www.nhs.uk/ask-for-a-coronavirus-test> or by calling 119. There is no need for other members of their household to have a test, unless they are also symptomatic.

COVID-19 test centres will be open throughout the Christmas and New Year period so we would encourage anyone with symptoms to book a test. The turnaround for test results has been very efficient recently so people shouldn't have to wait long for a result.

All other household members who remain well must stay at home and not leave the house for 10 days. This includes anyone in your 'Support Bubble'. The 10-day period starts from the day when the first person in the house became ill. Household members should not go to work, school or public areas and exercise should be taken within the home.

Students should also self isolate at home if someone in their household has developed the Covid-19 Symptoms and is awaiting the outcome of a Covid Test.

Further self isolation guidance information is available at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-stay-at-home-guidance/stay-at-home-guidance-for-households-with-possible-coronavirus-covid-19-infection>

Thank you and Merry Christmas

As we approach the end of this distinctively unique year my overriding feeling is of great pride. Pride in the community for all of your support throughout some very challenging times; pride in all of our staff who have placed themselves selflessly at the forefront of the national response of the pandemic at considerable personal risk and amaze me daily by their care, grit and practical determination to carry on throughout it all, and pride in our wonderful students who, at a time in life where they should be enjoying the journey of discovery and growing independence, have responded so maturely and responsibly given the huge limitations placed upon their lives.

It is, of course, a great shame that we have not been able to offer our students all the extra-curricular character building and enrichment opportunities we ordinarily would have done in Term's 1 and 2 in non Covid times. These are, of course, hallmarks of the exceptional education we aim to provide as what happens outside of lessons as much as inside them is equally important in developing our young people into the brilliant young adults that we see them grow into.

Since March we have had to become accustomed to new ways of living and working; often associated with adherence to new restrictions and less freedoms in order to help keep everyone safe. Rarely have we celebrated the positives that have come out of the terrible situation we have all been faced with. How we have come together as a community, in looking after each other and supporting each other through these tough times has shone through during the bleak events of the last 10 months. Thank you to every member of our community for playing your part so willingly and so positively. A strong community comes from the contribution of everyone within it, and we have seen the best of that this year. The level of support and kind messages of gratitude we have continued to receive from our parent community in the most challenging of circumstances has been overwhelming; we greatly value your support.

We know 2021 is going to present its own challenges. Like you, we want the very best for your children and together we will continue to do our best to make this aspiration a reality.

Again, apologies for the length of this letter but it's important to update you on such matters.

Finally, I look forward to welcoming back staff and students from their Christmas break and wish all our families and friends a restful, peaceful, merry and healthy Christmas holiday.



Take care

Rod Bell
Headteacher