

**12<sup>th</sup> November, 2020**

## **Coronavirus - COVID-19 - Update**

Dear Parents and Carers,

### **Lockdown 2**

I trust that everyone continues to be well and hope that you are managing to navigate the government guidance to keep you and your families safe. All of our schools remain open and we will continue to keep things that way for as long as we are able to do so, following the advice we receive from the Department for Education.

### **COVID Figures**

The South West has managed to keep virus numbers remarkably low; we all need to work hard to keep it that way. Thankfully, Bridge Schools have had no children who have contracted the virus and we have only had one staff member as a confirmed case who is now well enough to return to work.

We have however, had 164 cases this term where staff and children have been advised to self-isolate. This has an impact on all the schools managing bubbles and obviously affects our best efforts to provide the continuity of learning we need. Staff have been covering more playtime and lunchtime duties than normal to cover for absent colleagues to keep things running for which we are grateful.

### **Absence**

We are into the normal coughs, colds and flu season where we are seeing an increase in absence. In the current situation we all share heightened awareness of any symptoms displayed by anyone and encourage them to stay at home which further impacts on absence figures. Whilst children are well, we really need them in school. Administration staff will follow up any absence with a phone call or text following normal school procedures, as you will appreciate, the spreadsheets to record this are complex!

### **Friday Afternoons**

We have committed to continue to ask parents to collect children a little earlier on a Friday afternoon while we work through the additional pressures in the current climate. It has been valuable for staff well-being to give them the time back whilst everyone covers for absence in one form or another. There are a few points of additional information I would like to clarify:

- We are not closing schools; we are asking parents to support us in collecting children early on a Friday afternoon to release teachers. We do continue to provide 'Educare' on a Friday afternoon and unlike some schools, we do not charge for this. All parents can access this on all school sites if they need it.
- We can get into classrooms early for cleaning purposes – further cleaning in a more intensive way enabling us to give children safe clean access to resources.
- We can provide PPA - Planning Preparation and Assessment time for staff which does not compromise the 'bubble' system we are running.
- It allows us to bring staff together for training, advice, and guidance in response to an ever-changing picture of information from the DfE
- COVID restrictions mean everything is taking longer and is more difficult for staff to manage than in normal circumstances, Friday afternoons gives staff more time to cater for this.
- Staff well-being – staff are being cautious not to spread any germs so the normal viruses are being contained at home to keep staff well, this means colleagues are covering more lunch and break duties throughout the day and assisting cover staff with routines and planning.
- By being more thorough with all the measures in place we are hoping to reduce the chance of having to close bubbles, keeping schools open - to date we haven't closed any this term.

Cont./...

.../Cont.

We are all grateful for your continued patience and the arrangements you have made to allow this to continue to take place, the Local Authority are in support of any safe measures which means schools remain open.

### **Catch-Up Curriculum**

Our aim remains to bring the children to the point they would have been at next summer, had the COVID-19 experience not happened. In educational terms this continues to be a challenge covering staff and children's absence, keeping everyone buoyant and positive.

The catch-up money we have been given varies on the size of school as it is generated on pupil numbers, but all monies have been given to heads to secure the greatest impact on children's learning. We are of course grateful for the extra money, but it only equates to £26 per pupil per term. We therefore need to spend wisely! Each school has developed a plan which includes releasing class teachers once a week to take smaller groups focusing on the specific needs of each child. We plan to use as many specialist teachers as we can to enrich the wider curriculum work for all the children, giving them access to new and creative experiences, wherever possible.

### **Distance learning**

We have bought and set up an additional 2000 licenses to Microsoft Teams in 365. We are now in a position where all Key Stage 2 children have access to Microsoft Teams through an account of their own. We have also started to roll out access to Year 2 and Year 1 children. We have on-going staff training in the use and deployment of Teams as a teaching and learning tool. Please speak to your child's class teacher if you have not received the relevant information. Could I also remind parents who have yet to complete the consent form sent in September to do so as quickly as possible to allow access to the platform. Whether further restrictions are applied or not to schools, we are ready to use digital platforms as part of our provision for all our children – a positive outcome from a problematic period. I am grateful to all the staff involved in making this possible and to you as parents for getting children to log in to our safe, online space.

I will continue to update you as we receive new information but for now, I wish everyone continued good health.

Yours sincerely,

Adrian Massey and everyone at Bridge Schools