



Ancaster

Church of England Primary School

Thursday 6th January 2022

Dear Parents and Carers,

May I begin by saying Happy New Year to you all. It has been wonderful to reopen the school and see and hear the chatter from the festive period and how much fun has been had over the last couple of weeks. I do hope that 2022 is a prosperous year for you and your families as well as the school. As we begin 2022, I feel that I should write to you to discuss the current situation with Covid-19, the steps we are taking in school to manage and reduce transmission of the virus as well as expectations placed on you as parents to work with us to ensure that we are doing everything we can to protect the face to face education of our children.

In December when Omicron became a variant of concern, we swiftly moved back to adults wearing masks in communal areas and also ensured that we reduced the amount of adult mixing as best as physically possible. Whilst we are not returning to 'bubbles' and are not implementing staggered starts etc, we are taking a very cautious role in ensuring that we do everything we can to limit the spread of Covid when it presents itself in school. All staff undertake twice weekly lateral flow tests and we also ensure that thorough cleaning of the school happens every day with high traffic/touch areas cleaned throughout the day too. We continue to encourage regular hand washing and maintain high levels of ventilation within each classroom. This does make each room a little colder than usual so if you feel that sending your child in extra layers is necessary, then that is absolutely fine as long as their school uniform is still visible and in place. At this stage, face masks are not advised to be worn by primary aged pupils. We continue to limit the number of visitors to the school and ask that you try and limit your contact with staff as best as possible. At drop off and pick up points, staff will be wearing face masks and whilst it is not mandatory, we now ask that if you can, you too wear a face mask at this high traffic time as there are potentially high numbers of people all circulating a small area in a short period of time, making distancing very difficult. As drop and collection are outside, the wearing of masks is your own choice but one that we do strongly recommend for your own safety.

The key piece of information that we now know is that Omicron is a more transmissible virus. This means that we are likely to see more cases within our school than ever before. We are ready to accept that this will mean higher levels of absence for both pupils and staff as they undertake isolation periods and you will have no doubt read within the media about the shortage of supply teachers to help cope with the widespread demand that is being felt within the education sector. We will use our staff team flexibly, which may mean classes being covered by unfamiliar adults from across the school when we have been unable to gain the services of a Supply Teacher. In all cases, we continue to prioritise the continuity of education for all of our pupils and constantly balance this against the health and safety of all.

Whilst we will do everything we can to ensure all staff are used as flexibly as possible, there may be an instance where a lack of school-based staff and a lack of being able to gain the services of a supply teacher means our ability to provide safe face to face education has been compromised. If this occurs, as an absolute last resort, we may have to move a year group to remote learning to ensure that the consistency of education continues in as safe manner as possible whilst the staffing crisis at that time improves. If this is the case, then we will update you with this plan as early as possible. I do want to reiterate that this is not a tactic that we would deploy to manage a situation unless we absolutely need to. If this is the case, then we will update you with this plan as early as possible. I do want to reiterate that this is not a tactic that we would deploy to manage a situation unless we absolutely need to and would be a last resort. If your child is absent from school due to a positive case of Covid-19 resulting in isolation, daily work will be set on Microsoft TEAMS and we will expect this work to be completed if your child is fit and well enough to do so.

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Head Teacher: Mr Sam Eden



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With high case rates expected in all areas of society, and certainly reflected in the daily numbers we are seeing nationally, it is important you are aware of the process we go through when alerting you to cases that are occurring within each class setting. Within school, we are constantly looking at the children and staff where tests identify positive cases and whether there are links between them that establish transmission (family links, class links etc) and once we reach a certain trigger point, we liaise with the Local Health Protection Team. We will never identify individual names of people who have tested positive and where an outbreak is confirmed, we will then follow local and national guidance to ensure that we do everything we can to manage future transmission. Part of this will be to alert you to the fact that there are **rising case numbers** in your child's class and to ask you to test your child to look for asymptomatic testing. Rules for PCR tests are changing from 11th January and the use of Lateral Flow Devices (LFD) are becoming more widespread, as a result, it might be worth parents beginning to get into a family routine where you regularly test your child (twice per week) as there are still very high levels of asymptomatic infection which contributes to the spread of the virus when people do not know that they are infectious. Whilst I am certainly not stating that all children must be tested in order to attend school, it would be helpful if a regular testing regime occurred in more households as the asymptomatic/early infection identification could happen more quickly and help us stop chains of transmission amongst both staff and children. If you do test and the result is negative, you do not need to let us know this outcome. If you encounter issues or resistance from your child in relation to testing, then please do not cause any unnecessary trauma as I do appreciate that for young children, the experience is not pleasant.

If a child has tested positive, they will be subject to the same isolation rules as adults and these too have recently changed. When a child tests positive on a lateral flow, if they are asymptomatic (no symptoms) then the lateral flow signals the beginning of isolation and the result should be reported to the NHS-no PCR will be needed. Please inform school of this positive test and send proof. If Covid symptoms are present (cough, temperature, loss of smell/taste) then a PCR should be booked regardless of a Lateral Flow result and isolation should occur until the test result has been gained. Positive test outcomes should be emailed to the school. This will help us code registers appropriately and ensure that remote learning is planned for the correct number of dates. Isolation is still for a maximum of 10 days but new guidance states that negative lateral flows gained on day 6 and 7 will mean an individual can be released early from isolation on day 8 as this will suggest that the person is no longer infectious. Proof will need to be sent to school of this negative testing prior to a child returning to school. If the tests are positive on day 6 and 7 then isolation should continue until day 10 unless there is a continuation of a temperature meaning isolation should continue until it is no longer present. Children without a temperature and regardless of test outcome after day 10 can return to school.

I do appreciate that there is a large amount of information in this letter and if you have any further questions, please do not hesitate to contact me to discuss further

Yours Sincerely,

Mr Sam Eden
Headteacher

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