

23<sup>rd</sup> September 2020

Dear Parents/ Carers,

## General update

You will have seen from the news last night that the situation regarding COVID-19 and the pandemic, is not going away and that the government is considering further measures to reduce the infection risk.

We have been fortunate in North Devon that the number of cases has been very low compared to the rest of the country, but we need to recognise that the rates in this area, are in all likelihood, going to increase over the winter period.

### Managing cold and flu symptoms

Can I firstly thank you all for the efforts made so far, I really do appreciate the understanding shown regarding keepings pupils with cold and flu symptoms away from school. As I said previously, last week was unmanageable and using the phraseology of the government, we had to 'flatten the curve'.

The number of coughs and colds in the school has significantly reduced and there is greater understanding of the importance of avoiding spreading coughs in particular. Therefore I would like to relax the rules regarding symptoms of colds, such as sore throats, runny noses and sneezes and pupils will now be able to attend school with these symptoms.

However, if those symptoms develop into a cough, I would still ask for your child to remain at home. Please see the link to the recent DCC guidance released on Monday <https://www.devon.gov.uk/coronavirus-advice-in-devon/children-education/covid19-school-absence/> which makes it very clear how difficult it is to distinguish between colds/flu and COVID-19. The guidance continues to state that pupils should self-isolate and get tested, even if they have "mild symptoms" of COVID-19. A cough is a symptom of COVID-19.

### Fire Drill

As you are probably aware, fire drills in public buildings are required by law and we usually endeavour to have a drill at the start of term. We have already taken each year group to their muster points and explained the process, but we are still required to do a full fire drill, including the alarm and whole school evacuation.

In normal circumstances, we do not give staff, pupils or parents any warning of fire drills, to make it as realistic as possible. However, due to COVID-19 we do need to balance the fire drill requirements with minimising risk of transmission. Therefore, I need to advise you that we will be conducting a fire drill on Friday 25<sup>th</sup> September.

In order to minimise risk, I would ask you to ensure your child has a mask on them that can be worn from the point when the bell sounds. They will be reminded of this today and again tomorrow, in morning registration. The muster points are outside but the expectation will be for

pupils to continue wearing their masks until they are either returned to their classrooms, or dismissed at the end of the day. If your child is unable to wear a mask for medical reasons, please make sure they have their exemption card to hand to show staff.

## **Buses**

A large number of our pupils arrive on designated school transport, or what is now designated public transport. I need to remind all pupils that whilst not mandatory, it is the expectation of Devon County Council, Stagecoach and GTS, that masks are worn throughout the entire journey. Bus drivers need to focus on driving safely and not enforcing behaviour and/or wearing of masks. You will appreciate the potential risk of transmission during the journey and it is in everyone's interest that masks are worn, it is a collective responsibility to reduce risk to all. Can I once again ask for your support in this by ensuring your child is provided with a mask and the message regarding wearing it, is enforced. As previously mentioned, if your child is unable to wear a mask for medical reasons, please ensure that they have their medical exemption card on them at all times.

## **Roadmap to normality**

You will have heard regularly on the news talks of roadmaps to unlocking and recovery. I would like to reassure you that whilst the government is currently imposing greater lockdown controls, we are continuing to plan a roadmap to normal return in school when it is possible.

We are acutely aware of the impact of limiting the curriculum and removing practical's from subjects, such as Science, DT, food and art and we are looking to gradually reinstate these lessons over the coming weeks and months. Please bear with us, as local and national guidance continues to change weekly and we may be prevented from making the changes we would like.

## **Remote learning**

Finally, you will have seen from the news that increasing numbers of year groups and/or schools have been shut due to COVID-19 cases and we are preparing a variety of remote learning solutions should that happen here. In the next few days you will receive a survey regarding access to internet and I.T. facilities at home and it is essential that we get a 100% return from parents in order to support our planning.

The impact of COVID-19 in schools will be long term and we will continue to adapt and change what we are doing for our young people and community. I would like to thank you in advance for your support and understanding in these challenging and unprecedented times.

Yours faithfully,



Andy Bloodworth  
Headteacher