

HOLYWELL SCHOOL

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Update Letter – 6th November, 2020

Dear Students, Parents and Carers

I hope that this update letter finds you all safe and well.

Following the Prime Minister's announcement last Sunday and the subsequent vote in parliament, we suddenly find ourselves in a second Lockdown. Brief updated guidance was published late on Wednesday afternoon with further updates on Thursday – we anticipate more over the weekend. The main difference this time is that schools are to remain open and that all students are expected to attend.

There are some significant changes in the guidance. As a result, we will need to make some adjustments to our School Plan and we will need to review our risk assessment. This will be done and in place for next week, however, I wanted to make you aware of some immediate changes that will come into effect from Monday, 9th November.

a) Face coverings

From Monday, all students and adults will need to wear face coverings when moving around the premises. This includes in corridors and when moving from class to class. This is mandatory for Years 7, 8 and for adults on the school site. Although this is not mandatory in Primary schools, as we are operating a secondary curriculum model, we are asking all students (including Years 5 and 6) to wear a face covering between lessons. Face coverings will be optional at break and lunchtime (as students are outside and in their year group bubbles). We will have a small supply of emergency face coverings in school, however, it would be greatly appreciated if students had their own reusable face covering with them from Monday.

With regard to face coverings in lessons, the guidance states: *"Based on current evidence and the measures that schools are already putting in place, such as the system of controls and consistent bubbles, face coverings will not be necessary in the classroom even where social distancing is not possible. Face coverings could have a negative impact on teaching and their use in the classroom should be avoided."*

Face coverings should continue to be worn by students in Years 7 and 8 when travelling on dedicated school transport to secondary school. Our advice is that all students (inc. KS2) should wear face coverings unless they are medically exempt.

b) Attendance

The guidance states that:

"Being at school is vital for children's education and for their wellbeing. Time spent out of school is detrimental for children's cognitive and academic development, particularly for disadvantaged children. This impact can affect both current levels of education, and children's future ability to learn. It continues to be our aim that all pupils, in all year groups, remain in school full-time."

"The risk to children themselves of becoming severely ill from coronavirus (COVID-19) is very low and there are negative health impacts of being out of school. For the vast majority of children, the benefits of being back in the classroom far outweigh the low risk from coronavirus (COVID-19) and schools can take action to reduce risks still further."

With specific reference to Clinically Extremely Vulnerable children, it says: *"More evidence has emerged that shows there is a very low risk of children becoming very unwell from coronavirus (COVID-19), even for children with existing health conditions. Most children originally identified as clinically extremely*



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vulnerable no longer need to follow original shielding advice. Parents should be advised to speak to their child's GP or specialist clinician if they have not already done so, to understand whether their child should still be classed as clinically extremely vulnerable. Those children whose doctors have confirmed they are still clinically extremely vulnerable are advised not to attend education whilst the national restrictions are in place."

"Children who live with someone who is clinically extremely vulnerable, but who are not clinically extremely vulnerable themselves, should still attend education."

This is a clear direction from the government that all students should attend school.

c) Curriculum and Teaching

Lessons will continue to be taught in tutor groups so as to reduce the number of contacts students have.

Music and Drama lessons will still happen (including peripatetic music lessons) as stringent safety precautions are in place.

PE lessons have been planned to ensure compliance with safety measures and the following guidance is being observed: *"Outdoor sports should be prioritised where possible, and large indoor spaces used where it is not, maximising natural ventilation flows (through opening windows and doors or using air conditioning systems wherever possible), distancing between pupils and paying scrupulous attention to cleaning and hygiene. This is particularly important in a sports setting because of the way in which people breathe during exercise."*

d) Visitors to the site

We are discouraging visitors to the site at this time, unless this is related either to the welfare/support of a student or a matter of health, safety or maintenance. Meetings with parents will preferably be by telephone or Zoom and appointments must be made in advance through the school office. Where meetings have to take place on site, all adults must wear face coverings, have a temperature check and hand-sanitise before entering the building. Strict social distancing will be required.

e) Communication

Please keep us informed of any Coronavirus-linked issues (see the 'What to do if...' help-sheet on the school website) and do not send students to school if they are showing any of the key symptoms:

- a high temperature – this means you feel hot to touch on your chest or back (you do not need to measure your temperature)
- a new, continuous cough – this means coughing a lot for more than an hour, or 3 or more coughing episodes in 24 hours (if you usually have a cough, it may be worse than usual)
- a loss or change to your sense of smell or taste – this means you've noticed you cannot smell or taste anything, or things smell or taste different to normal

f) Courtesy to staff

In addition to the continued communication of key information, we have a further request with regard to the manner of communication. We pride ourselves on the high-quality of home-school relations and the vast majority of conversations and interactions we have with parents and carers are both supportive and good-natured. Recently, we have had some very challenging and uncomfortable conversations. Our staff come to work to care and support students and families, and it is important for everyone in our community and our staff to be treated with courtesy and dignity. We appreciate that these are very stressful times, however, we politely request that all communication is polite and respectful; aggressive behaviour towards our staff or any member of our community on the school site or on the telephone will not be tolerated under any circumstances.

Thank you

Thank you for your continued support in these most difficult of times. Plans and updated risk assessments will be updated early next week and, in the spirit of our value of the month (Peace), we look forward to a peaceful and productive week.

Best wishes

MG Simpson

Headteacher