

30th November 2021

Dear Families,

I hope that you are all well.

I am sure that you will all be aware of the new COVID-19 variant, Omicron, and the precautionary measures that have been introduced nationally, to be reviewed by the government in three weeks' time. As you would expect, the Department for Education has also issued guidance around measures that schools should adopt to manage the new COVID-19 situation and I am writing to you today to share our school's position.

You will know that our commitment has always been to communicate frequently and openly with you about all COVID-related matters, including letting you know about any positive cases at school. Since returning in September, we have had 19 positive cases at Riverside School (6 pupils and 13 staff) and all three sites have been affected by positive cases. As a result of our existing control measures and current advice around self-isolation, I am pleased to say that no additional pupils have had to self-isolate as a result of any identified positive cases.

In recent weeks, we have all been looking forward to the wide range of events planned for the final month of term. In my weekly letters I have reiterated our hope that "despite the continued COVID challenges, we are still very hopeful that our remaining events will take place as planned", and we have been open and honest in our communications that "these events are planned to be in-person, but are subject to change should this be necessary".

Our message has been the same throughout the pandemic, namely to do whatever we can to ensure your child's school experiences remain as happy and positive as possible, despite any restrictions that have been put in place. Our sense of responsibility has also remained constant, namely to keep our whole school community as safe as we possibly can, and as we approach the Christmas season, this remains a top priority for everyone: pupils, families and staff alike. With this in mind, please find below the measures that we are introducing at Riverside School, with effect from today, Tuesday 30th November, until the end of term (Friday 17th December):

- All staff will be wearing face coverings in communal areas, both inside and outside, on all three sites.
- All parents dropping off/collecting children from the school grounds are requested to wear a face covering, unless they are exempt from doing so.
- If your child has COVID-19 symptoms, you will be asked to arrange a PCR test for them and as soon as the results come back negative, they can return to school as long as they are well enough to do so.
- In line with Government guidance, if there is a suspected case of the Omicron variant, all identified contacts will have to self-isolate regardless of their age and vaccination status.
- Given the high rates of COVID-19 in the community, we will be restricting the number of visitors coming into school and visits will only take place when considered absolutely essential.

- After much consideration, we have had to take the difficult decision to change our plans for some of the upcoming events that we had always hoped we would be able to open up to families. In light of the changing situation over the past couple of days, and our commitment and responsibility to keep the whole school community as safe as possible in the final few weeks of term and into the Christmas break, we feel that it would not be appropriate to bring together large groups of family members to attend the Beckenham Show on Friday 3rd December, the SPC Primary Show on Thursday 9th December and the Family Panto on Wednesday 15th December.

These events will still happen for the children, but rather than performing to an audience, they will be filmed instead, for you to enjoy with your child at home afterwards. We appreciate that this is not the same as seeing them live, and we also know how many of you were looking forward to coming into school. However, we feel that the risks of bringing so many different people together are too great and we do not want to compromise the safety of our school community by going ahead with large-scale public events indoors, where we cannot guarantee high levels of ventilation or social distancing. Whilst I know that many of you will be disappointed, we hope that you will understand our position.

As stated on many occasions, we take our responsibilities towards our whole school community very seriously and we want the final three weeks of term to be filled with seasonal joy, excitement and fun. Please be assured that we will continue to do everything we can to provide this for your wonderful children and we thank you once again for your understanding during these continuing uncertain times.

With very best wishes,



Steve Solomons
Headteacher