

2<sup>nd</sup> November 2020

Dear Families,

I hope that you are all safe and well and had a good half term.

Since returning to school in September, we have tried to ensure that the school experience looks and feels as close to "normal" as it can, and your children appear to have coped so well with the changes we have had to make. So, whilst we haven't been able to offer our usual range of school trips, phase or whole-school assemblies or events, or the same level of access to activities such as swimming, we have always tried to ensure that they continue to receive a highly personalised curriculum, one that focuses on the things that really matter. Targets and outcomes are aligned with their Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) and key documents, such as your child's Personal Learning Plan (PLP), Home Learning Plan (HLP) and Happiness Passport (HP) should also reflect exactly what they are working on. As always, if you have any questions about any of these documents, please do not hesitate to contact your child's class teacher.

As you will be aware, we put a number of measures in place at the start of term to ensure our school is as safe as it can be, including:

- Encouraging social distancing as far as is practicable, given our pupils' needs;
- Ensuring regular and increased cleaning in classrooms and shared spaces;
- Minimising the sharing of any resources and equipment and ensuring frequently touched objects and surfaces are cleaned and disinfected regularly;
- Encouraging frequent hand washing and good hygiene practices;
- Utilising outdoor space where possible;
- Keeping windows open to increase ventilation;
- Providing visual reminders and prompts to support children in their understanding of new practices;
- Introducing a "bubble" system, to keep children and staff as consistent as possible, whilst maintaining the safe and efficient running of the school;
- Restricting open access to specialist spaces and equipment and risk assessing access on a case-by-case basis;
- Restricting all off-site trips, large gatherings, swimming and school-based hydrotherapy, to be re-assessed each half term.

We keep these measures under regular review and, whilst our current arrangements are working well, we are never complacent. We continue to adapt in order to balance the smooth running of the school with our top priority to keep the whole Riverside School community as safe as possible and, in my letter dated 23<sup>rd</sup> September, I said that "we will, of course, keep you fully informed should any local or national guidance change". Further to London moving into Tier 2 of Coronavirus restrictions on 17<sup>th</sup> October and the subsequent announcement by the Prime Minister on 31<sup>st</sup> October that the

country will be entering into a national lockdown on 5<sup>th</sup> November, we believe that it is appropriate to take some additional precautionary measures, to keep our whole school community as safe as we can. These additional measures are in line with the World Health Organisation's advice and the latest guidance contained within three key documents:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/face-coverings-in-education/face-coverings-in-education> (published on 16th October);

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/actions-for-schools-during-the-coronavirus-outbreak/guidance-for-full-opening-schools> (published on 22nd October); and

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/what-parents-and-carers-need-to-know-about-early-years-providers-schools-and-colleges-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-outbreak/what-parents-and-carers-need-to-know-about-early-years-providers-schools-and-colleges-in-the-autumn-term#face-coverings> (published on 29<sup>th</sup> October).

New measures particularly relate to the latest guidance around face coverings, namely that “when an area moves to the local COVID alert level “high” or “very high”, in education settings where Year 7 and above are educated, face coverings should be worn by adults (staff and visitors) when moving around indoors, such as communal areas where social distancing is difficult to maintain”.

Therefore, from Monday 2<sup>nd</sup> November, we will be implementing the following measures:

- All staff and visitors moving around corridors and communal areas at Riverside SPC and Riverside Beckenham will wear a face covering or visor, unless they are exempt from doing so. This will not apply to staff at Riverside West Wickham due to current bubble sizes and the sharing of existing spaces.
- All staff taking children to and from families and / or minibuses at the beginning and end of the day, on all three sites, will wear a face covering or visor, unless they are exempt from doing so.
- All parents / carers dropping children off / collecting children within the school grounds, on all three sites, will be asked to wear a face covering or visor, unless they are exempt from doing so.

Please note that it will not usually be necessary for staff to wear face coverings in the classroom, and as per the guidance: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/face-coverings-when-to-wear-one-and-how-to-make-your-own/face-coverings-when-to-wear-one-and-how-to-make-your-own>, we will not be requesting, nor requiring any of our pupils to wear face coverings whilst at school. However, if when travelling to school, or moving around the school, pupils choose to do so, or their families wish them to do so, we will respect this decision.

These additional measures will provide an extra level of safety as positive cases increase locally and nationally. We are, of course, pleased that we have not had to send any pupils home due to positive cases at school so far, as we know that mainstream and special schools locally and nationally have had to implement partial school closures since September. However, we are never complacent and if we do have a positive case in school, we will deal with it sensitively, honestly and calmly. The new measures will also mean that should we have a positive case in school, we will be able to respond quickly, guided by the Department for Education and local Health Protection Team, to identify the close contacts of the person who has tested positive and minimise disruption for pupils, families and staff alike.

As you will be aware, the guidance about COVID-19 is ever-changing and we will continue to keep our communication channels open and transparent, whilst trying not to bombard you with “information overload”. This is because we want to ensure that you receive the latest, and most meaningful information for you and your child and with that in mind, we thought it would be useful to revisit a few frequently asked questions, in order to keep you, our Riverside families, completely up to date with the current position.

### **What will happen if a child displays Coronavirus symptoms at school?**

If a child displays Coronavirus symptoms at school, namely a high temperature, a new, continuous cough or a loss or change to their sense of smell or taste, we will contact you and ask you to follow the guidance, namely to book a COVID-19 test and self-isolate the whole household for 14 days. We do understand that at this time of year, children are likely to experience a range of illnesses, including common colds and seasonal flu and please be assured that we will not send your child home if they are only displaying cold-like symptoms, such as a runny nose, if they well enough to be in school. We understand that some children’s temperatures can fluctuate and we have a clear protocol in place to ensure that temperature checks are taken in a robust and child-centred way. We are also using the coughing criteria of “coughing a lot for more than an hour, or 3 or more coughing episodes in 24 hours) to determine whether or not to ask you to collect your child.

### **What will happen if a child or staff member is sent home with Coronavirus symptoms and subsequently receives a negative test result?**

We understand that there were a number of challenges for families and staff getting a test initially, although feedback suggest that this has improved a little in recent weeks. As soon as a child or member or staff receives a negative test result, they can return to school, providing they are well enough and have not been advised to self-isolate for other reasons.

### **What will happen if a child or staff member receives a positive test result?**

If either a child or member of staff tests positive for COVID-19, the school will contact the local health protection team who will carry out a risk assessment and identify the appropriate next steps. This will include the identification of everyone who has been in close contact with the person *during the period that they were infectious*. Close contact means:

- Direct close contacts – face to face contact with an infected person for any length of time, within one metre, including being coughed on, a face to face conversation, or unprotected physical contact (skin-to-skin).
- Proximity contacts – extended close contact (within 1-2 metres for more than 15 minutes) with someone who has tested positive for COVID-19.
- Travelling in a small vehicle with someone who has tested positive for COVID-19.

Those children / adults will be sent home and advised to self-isolate for 14 days since they were last in close contact with that person. Other household members do not need to self-isolate unless the child or staff member they live with subsequently develops symptoms. We will, of course, maintain open and transparent communication with the school community in this eventuality.

## **If my child needs to isolate at home, will they have access to learning?**

If your child needs to isolate at home, please contact your child's class teacher and discuss with them what support you would like whilst your child is at home. We hope that the new Home Learning Plans will support you and your child in this situation and we are also looking to extend the use of video technology to enable children who are at home to participate in video calls with their class. Our usual e-safety protocols will be followed but if you would prefer your child not to participate, please let us know.

## **What will happen if adult:child ratios drop as a result of staff having to self-isolate whilst waiting for a test result?**

We hope that the national testing arrangements continue to improve so that our staff do not have to stay at home for extended periods of time whilst waiting for a test result. Our staff are wholly committed to being in school as long as they are well enough to do so, and we also hope that our whole school community stays as healthy as possible as we enter the cold and flu season. As a school, we remain totally committed to doing everything within our power and control to keep classes and bubbles open and children attending school, but your child's safety is our top priority so if staffing ratios drop to what we deem to be an unsafe level, we will have to look at a range of options, including the possibility that we may need to close a class until staffing ratios are safe. This step would only be taken as a very last resort, however, we feel it is important to be open and transparent with you, should this situation occur.

Whilst we know that the country will be entering into a national lockdown on 5<sup>th</sup> November, we also know that schools are to remain open and we will do everything we can to keep your child safe, whilst continuing to offer them the opportunities and experiences they love. We ended the half term with the most wonderful Spooky Spectacular Day, with the school filled with magic, colour and laughter, and as we approach Christmas, it is fair to say that things will look a little different to usual. We will not be having our usual Christmas Fair, and our end-of-term performances and celebrations will also be different, but we will be creative and ensure the second half of term is filled with joy and happiness, regardless of the challenges we are all facing. So, here's to the next half term, when our values:

*Aspiration Resilience Creativity Humility Integrity Trust Enthusiasm Courage Teamwork*

will continue to shape everything we do.

With kindest regards,



Steve Solomons  
Headteacher