

22<sup>nd</sup> January 2021

Dear Families,

I hope that you are all safe and well and whether your child is currently in school or at home, I hope that things are going as well as they possibly can for both them and yourselves. Please remember that we are always here to support you, so if there is anything that we can do to make life a little bit easier, please do let us know.

As promised in previous letters, we will continue to update you on a weekly basis should any of our pupils or staff receive a positive COVID-19 test result across the school. We will of course inform you immediately if your child is directly affected. I can confirm that, since last Friday, we have had one pupil testing positive at Riverside SPC, resulting in three other pupils having to self-isolate. We have had four members of staff testing positive, three at Riverside SPC and one at Riverside West Wickham, but no further pupils needed to self-isolate as the staff concerned were either not in school or in an already self-isolating class. You will be aware that we have introduced a mass asymptomatic testing programme for all staff over all three sites and, in our second full week of testing, we have administered 127 tests, of which 126 were negative.

You will also be aware that we have a robust system of controls in place to keep our whole school community as safe as possible and these include classes remaining separate at all times (to reduce the number of pupils and staff affected if a positive case is identified); restricted use of shared spaces and enhanced cleaning across the school. Our testing programme is another way to minimise the risk of transmission in the school, as it identifies asymptomatic staff who could be carrying the virus and potentially passing it on.

Pupil safety and wellbeing remains at the heart of our decision-making and we have always been transparent about our protocols should staffing levels drop due to COVID-related factors. We are not sharing staff across classes so that we do not compromise our tight control measures and therefore, if we feel that the class is unsafe, we would take the decision to close it temporarily until staffing levels are safe again. We would only take this action as a last resort and over the past week, we have had to apply this protocol to just three classes, meaning that a small number of children have missed a day or two of school. If your child has been affected, we are sorry for any inconvenience caused and we hope you understand our position and rationale.

One additional, and very significant safety measure that we have been able to introduce this week has been rolling out vaccinations for our staff and we are delighted to say that over 100 staff have had their first jab this week. We are anticipating that all remaining staff will have their first jab before half term and we are very pleased that we have been able to provide this extra layer of protection to our staff and as a result, to your children and yourselves. We are never complacent though and as we enter the fourth week of term next week, with a 10% increase in pupils attending (to approximately 66%), we will continue to maintain our "safety first" agenda. I would, however, like to stress that whilst our precautionary measures are necessarily restrictive,

they do not mean that we ever lose sight of the important things in life. Many of these are simple: love, laughter, connection, and a sense of belonging, and these ingredients remain central to everything we try to do at Riverside School. Whether your child is in school or at home at the moment, we hope that they, and you, feel as connected as possible to the Riverside School community and together, we will get through this.

Wishing you all a happy, safe and healthy weekend.

With very best wishes,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'SSolomons', with a horizontal line under the 's' at the end.

Steve Solomons  
Headteacher