

23rd September 2020

Dear Families,

I hope that you are all safe and well and that your child has settled back into school life. I also hope that returning to school has provided you, and your family, with a sense of routine as we start adapting to the “new normal”, however that plays out in the weeks and months to come. From what we have seen over the past fortnight, the children have adapted so well to being back at school and for those children who can find such transitions tough, they have done this admirably. They are an absolute credit to you, and during these most challenging of times, you have done, and continue to do, an incredible job.

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 and these include:

- 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 (which we hope will also support their understanding about similar measures in the community).
- Introducing a new “bubble” system, made up of 3 or 4 classes, 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 at half term.

We keep these measures under regular review and are pleased to say that our “bubble” system, our lunchtime and playground arrangements and other new systems are working well. We are never complacent though, and we will adapt practices as and when needed, to balance the smooth running of the school with our top priority to keep the whole Riverside School community as safe as possible.

As you will be aware, there is so much information about COVID-19 out there and the guidance changes on a very regular basis. We will continue to keep our communication channels open and

transparent and will try 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. Therefore, with that in mind, I would like to draw your attention to the two attachments which accompany this letter: the latest information from the Department for Education regarding Coronavirus symptoms and testing and a letter from Bromley’s Director of Public Health. In addition to this latest national and local guidance, 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 also 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.

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 have been a number of challenges for families and staff getting a test and please be assured that we have escalated our concerns. You will be aware that availability of testing is a national issue at the moment, but until a negative test result is secured, children and staff cannot return to school. Schools have been provided with ten tests only, which can be re-ordered periodically, but given the size of our school, we will not be in a position to offer tests to the vast majority of those that request one. We will carry out an individual risk assessment to determine how we distribute the tests that we have and we appreciate your understanding if we are unable to provide a test for your child. As soon as a child or staff member receives a negative test result, they can return to school and their fellow household members can end their self-isolation.

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. 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.

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

We sincerely hope that the national testing arrangements will improve so that our staff do not have to stay at home for extended periods of time whilst waiting for a test result. 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. 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 wanted to be open with you from the outset should this eventuality occur.

We will, of course, keep you fully informed should any local or national guidance change, but as I wrote in my letter dated 2nd September: "Despite the challenges that everyone faces, we will never lose sight of what really matters. We want your child to love being at school, surrounded by people that love being with them". Nothing has changed and our values

Aspiration Resilience Creativity Humility Integrity Trust Enthusiasm Courage Teamwork

are as important today as they have always been. Despite the current challenges, you can expect us to deliver.

With kindest regards,



Steve Solomons
Headteacher