

Friday 27 November 2020

Dear parents

You will be aware that earlier this week we were informed of three positive cases of Covid-19 amongst the Third Form pupils. These were in addition to another case in the Third Form two weeks ago, bringing the total to four cases in the Third Form within two weeks; these cases were amongst three different form groups. We now have three 'live' cases (in two form groups), as the isolation period for the first of these cases has now expired.

I also need to inform you that we were informed on Thursday evening of a further positive case in the First Form. The whole of the First Form is at home today while we identify the contacts of the positive pupil; the pupil and those contacts will need to isolate for two weeks, and the rest of the First Form will return on Monday. Those First Form pupils who are able to return on Monday next week will be informed directly later today.

This brings to total number of confirmed cases in school this term to 11: 1 in the First Form, 4 in the Third Form, 1 in the Junior Sixth Form, 1 in the Senior Sixth Form, 2 amongst teaching staff, 1 visiting teacher and 1 member of support staff. We would naturally prefer this number to be lower, but we are aware of many schools which have a much higher number of cases.

Understandably, some parents have contacted us to ask us for further information about what we are doing at school to keep the pupils safe, and what processes we follow when we are informed of a positive case. I wanted to write to offer reassurance that we are continuing to do all we can to mitigate risk to pupils and staff, and also to give further insight into the processes and protocols that we follow in School, all of which are in strict accordance with government advice and that given by Public Health England. These are set out below.

### The process

- In each example of a confirmed case, all the other pupils in that pupil's form group will be asked to isolate.
- Additionally, we conduct an in-school contact tracing process to identify the 'close contacts' of the confirmed case from outside of their form group. This involves identifying who the confirmed case came into contact with in the 48 hours before they became symptomatic until they were last in school. More detail about the definition of a 'contact' is given below.
- The contact tracing involved careful discussion with the positive case, a consideration of seating plans for their lessons, and consideration of their proximity to others during travel to and from school, lunchtime, and co-curricular activities.

- Whilst doing this, we report the positive case to the City of London Corporation (as our local authority), the local Public Health England team and the Department for Education. We would seek to act in line with any guidance they provide.
- Having confirmed the identities of the contacts, we inform them and their parents about the need for them to self-isolate, and the date when they may return to school.
- We then inform the wider school community, including staff, parents and governors. We do not reveal the identity of the positive case in any of these communications, as the diagnosis of being COVID-19-positive is medical information, and so we would like to encourage parents and pupils to support us in exercising discretion about the identity of the confirmed case.
- The rooms that have been occupied by the positive case are then given additional cleaning, with access to these rooms restricted until the cleaning is complete.

### **Definitions of contacts**

This information is reproduced from the Government's [guidance for contacts of people with confirmed coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#):

*A 'contact' is a person who has been close to someone who has tested positive for COVID-19 anytime from 2 days before the person was symptomatic up to 10 days from onset of symptoms (this is when they are infectious to others). For example, a contact can be:*

- *people who spend significant time in the same household as a person who has tested positive for COVID-19*
- *sexual partners*
- *a person who has had face-to-face contact (within 1m), with someone who has tested positive for COVID-19, including:*
  - *being coughed on*
  - *having a face-to-face conversation within 1m*
  - *having skin-to-skin physical contact, or*
  - *contact within 1m for one minute or longer without face-to-face contact*
- *a person who has been within 2ms of someone who has tested positive for COVID-19 for more than 15 minutes*
- *a person who has travelled in a small vehicle with someone who has tested positive for COVID-19 or in a large vehicle or plane near someone who has tested positive for COVID-19*

*Where an interaction between 2 people has taken place through a Perspex (or equivalent) screen, this would not be considered sufficient contact, provided that there has been no other contact such as any of those indicated above.*

### **The thresholds for wider action**

We continue to work closely with Public Health England and the Department for Education regarding our protocols and processes and reflect and consider these daily. PHE are clear that the threshold for when we would need to consider the isolation of a whole year group bubble is 5 confirmed cases or more within a 14 day period. We have not reached this threshold, and if we were to it would not necessarily automatically lead to the isolation of the whole year-group – that decision would be a nuanced one, depending on the precise circumstances of each of the positive cases, which would be taken in consultation with the public health advisors.

Other thresholds exist that may also require us to consider taking wider action than the approach outlined above. These are:

- If we have cases in three or more different year-group bubbles within a 14 period
- If we have a single case that leads to the hospitalization of a single positive case

Obviously, we are actively monitoring the progress of the existing cases and the health of all staff and pupils. If and when we reach these thresholds, we would act accordingly, in communication with the public health advisors.

### **Other important information**

The risk mitigation procedures in place in school remain similar to those that we have been employing since the start of term. These include the bubbling of pupils, one-way systems, regular cleaning of door handles and other high-touch points, desk and chair cleaning, the fogging of changing rooms, social distancing and regular reminders to pupils of the importance of frequent and thorough hand-washing. We have looked into the option of reliable temperature-checking of the pupils on arrival, but we have concluded that we are not able to introduce this at this time – I would remind you that we would like you to check your son's temperature before attending school on Monday mornings (as a minimum, and it would be helpful to check more regularly).

The government is publishing updated guidance with regard to the national system of Tiers that will be in place after the current lockdown ends on 2 December (see [here](#) and [here](#)) – London will be in Tier 2: High Alert. The first of these links gives information about the restrictions in place in each tier.

Like at half-term, restrictions will remain in place regarding the need for quarantining after returning from overseas travel. I would ask that you check these carefully, in order that your son is able to return to school in person on the first day of the Spring term, Tuesday 5 January.

### **In conclusion**

We are eager to ensure that, in accordance with government advice, that pupils access education in School wherever possible. Our priority remains with providing a high quality education to the pupils, in School wherever possible.

I do hope this provides helpful clarification. Should you have any questions, please do contact me.

Everyone here is grateful for your ongoing support. Let us all hope that the vaccines under development give us all respite within the coming months.

Best wishes,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Richard Brookes". The script is cursive and fluid, with the first letters of "Richard" and "Brookes" being capitalized and prominent.

Richard Brookes  
Senior Deputy Head