

11th December 2020

Dear Parents and Carers,

RE: COVID19 Update – DfE announcement regarding earlier closure of schools for Christmas

As we fast approach the start of the Christmas holidays, I am writing to provide you with an update on our end of term arrangements and overall expectations during the school holiday period, in light of COVID-19 and following new guidance released this week by the Department for Education (DfE).

In line with the new guidance, we have taken the decision to implement INSET time on Friday 18th December and to close the academy for the Christmas break $\frac{1}{2}$ a day earlier than originally planned. Due to our current circumstances this will mean that Year 7s will remain on site learning and Year 8, 9 10, 11 will continue to remote learn via Microsoft Teams with our **last day of term now being Thursday 17th December (3.00pm). The start of the Spring Term will remain on Tuesday 5th January.**

The DfE has given schools the ability to make this decision in order to help ensure everyone has the much-needed rest they deserve, and to help avoid as much as possible the need for people to have to self-isolate over the holidays. We appreciate that this may cause some inconvenience for child care arrangements for Friday 18th December, but it is a decision that we have made with the health, safety and wellbeing of both our students and staff, and we thank you in advance for your ongoing support, understanding and cooperation at this time.

These are of course very trying times for everyone, and there may be some apprehension about the possibility of a need for anyone to have to self-isolate over Christmas. With continuing high rates of positive cases in the Thurrock locality and surrounding Essex boroughs, it is a possibility that people may find they are alerted through contact tracing that they have had proximity contact with someone who has tested positive for COVID-19 and will therefore need to self-isolate. It is vital that everyone does continue to comply with hand washing, social distancing and self-isolation measures in order to stem the tide of transmission everywhere and get the virus under control. Given that we are closing for the break earlier than initially planned, however, we do anticipate that this will reduce the levels of contact tracing and self-isolation being required.

None of this is easy, especially at this time of year, but we must all work together as a community to do what is within our power to keep everyone as safe and healthy as possible, and this is incredibly important over the next few weeks. We must also all continue to do what we can to ensure our pupils are able to enjoy their learning in the classroom in order to mitigate as much as possible the challenges COVID-19 has presented to their education over the course of 2020.

As a reminder of how contact tracing works through the academy, and how it will work over the Christmas break:

- **Between now and the end of term**, if an individual test's positive for COVID-19, as soon as we are notified, we will liaise with health authorities to determine whether the class, year group or bubble needs to be closed, and notify the proximity contacts that **they must self-isolate for 14 days**. In this situation, pupils will have remote learning for if in term time.
- **Between Friday 18th December through to Wednesday 23rd December**, the DfE advice is "for the first 6 days after teaching ends, if a pupil or staff member tests positive for coronavirus (COVID-19), having developed symptoms within 48 hours of being in school, the school is asked to assist in identifying close contacts and advising self-isolation, as the individual may have been infectious whilst in school." If this is the case then the parent/carer of the child or staff member must email the academy immediately on covid19@ormistonpark.org.uk clearly highlighting the following information within the email:
 - Name of person with COVID19 symptoms**
 - Date of first symptoms**
 - Type of symptoms**
 - Date of test**
 - Date of test result**
 - Screenshot of test result**
 - Last day in the academy**
 - Contacts on the last 2 days in the academy at 1m for 1min+**
 - Contacts on the last 2 days in the academy at 1.5-2m for 15min+**
- **From Wednesday 23rd December through to 4th January**, the DfE advice is "school staff are not asked to remain on-call or conduct any contact tracing more than 6 days after the final day of teaching. Where schools last teaching day is on Thursday 17 December, there should be no pupil contact tracing asks beyond Wednesday 23 December." If a child has COVID19 symptoms over this time a test should be booked immediately and contact should be through NHS 119.

I also just wanted to remind everyone of the measures we can all take to help stop the spread of the virus, to help protect our community:

- If your child, a household member or a member of your support bubble develops any of the following symptoms, we ask that you notify the school immediately and arrange a test by visiting <https://www.nhs.uk/ask-for-a-coronavirus-test> or by phoning 119:
 - a new continuous cough
 - a high temperature
 - a loss of, or change in, your normal sense of taste or smell (anosmia)

If your child develops any of these symptoms, they must not come to school and should remain at home for at least 10 days from the date when their symptoms appeared. All other household members who remain well, must stay at home and not leave the house for 14 days from the date when their symptoms appeared. This includes anyone in your 'Support Bubble'.

- Further information is available at:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-stay-at-home-guidance/stay-at-home-guidance-for-households-with-possible-coronavirus-covid-19-infection>.
- If your child or anyone in the household does develop symptoms, you can seek further advice from NHS 111 at <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/symptoms/> or by phoning 111.
- As a community, we can also help reduce the risk of spreading COVID-19 by:
 - washing your hands with soap and water often – do this for at least 20 seconds
 - using hand sanitiser gel if soap and water are not available
 - washing your hands as soon as you get home
 - covering your mouth and nose with a tissue or your sleeve (not your hands) when you cough or sneeze
 - putting used tissues in the bin immediately and wash your hands afterwards

It continues to be an incredibly challenging time for everyone, and I am sure that we all have the same hopes for a more 'normal' 2021. We hugely appreciate your ongoing support, understanding and cooperation, and it continues to mean a great deal to know we have your support. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact the academy office info@ormistonpark.org.uk

Please do keep safe and well, and I hope you all find time to enjoy the season.

Yours sincerely,

Mark Roessler



Principal
Ormiston Park Academy