



8<sup>th</sup> November 2020

Dear Parents and Carers,

### **Coronavirus Update 24**

I think it could be helpful if, at least for the time being, I make one of these letters part of the weekly routine. There will not always be major events to report, but in these anxious times we will all need information that is accurate and up-to-date. This is what I aim to provide so far as the high school is concerned. Some letters will – I very much hope – have little to report, but I would not want any lack of news to be interpreted as an attempt to draw a veil over what is happening.

When I last wrote I shared my anxiety about the level of absence among the teaching staff. It soon became clear that we did not have the resources to teach a full timetable. As there is currently no possibility of a grouping classes together, I had to reduce the number of students on the site. This is why Years 8, 9 and 10 each spent one day at home last week.

We begin the new week in a rather better position, but I cannot exclude the possibility that something similar may happen again – and at short notice. Our reserves are very slender.

During the week since half term we have learned of five new cases, one member of staff, two Sixth Form students, one Year 10 student and a member of Year 8 (who had become unwell over half term). Those students and teachers are now at home, as are an additional 71 people who were Identified as close contacts.

I know that some Sixth Formers have equipped their phones with the NHS App which alerts them to any close proximity to the phone of a person found to be COVID positive. Several staff have done the same. Last week the App identified some apparently close contacts which surprised those of us who have rigorously applied the Public Health England criteria to each new set of circumstances. We have come to suspect that the Bluetooth signal on which the App depends is able to pass through some of our thin partition walls. We intend to test this suspicion during the coming week. Currently it seems the most plausible explanation of one member of staff's experience and it may be more widely relevant as well. In the meantime, we shall continue to apply the Public Health England criteria as before.

You may have seen that the government, whilst introducing the latest restrictions, made it compulsory to wear a face mask in school corridors and other congested parts of school buildings. This gives the force of government policy to the practice we have followed here at the high school. In addition, it means that students will be required to wear face coverings when using the study area at busy times when social distancing is not possible.

The week ahead is a time of national remembrance. In normal times I would have given a series of assemblies, each with a local theme. That cannot happen this year, but recordings of two of them will be shown to our students on Wednesday. As some of you may like to be involved in this I shall make one of the recordings available to you. It lasts for about ten minutes.

I wish all of you a safe week.

Yours sincerely,



Natalie Waters