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Dear Parents and Carers

I am of little doubt that you are all aware of the fact that yesterday the delivery of the Covid 19 vaccine commenced across the country, providing us all some hope that the end to the current circumstances is in sight. This is, I'm sure, considered good news for the whole country and particularly welcome to those of us in regions such as ours that are experiencing above average rates of infection. During Term 2, in particular, we have seen a dramatic rise in cases affecting the school communities within our Trust. The constant flow of reports of positive tests/instructions to isolate at the heart of this are presenting as particularly challenging for the moment.

With much consternation we have had to close almost all of our schools either fully, or partially to some year groups. These are not decisions taken lightly and only following consultation with all relevant bodies including Public Health England and the DFE. We are acutely aware that the impact on learning and on mental and physical health of missing education can be severe for children both now and in the future. This is especially true for our most vulnerable children and young people. We also understand the importance for you in being able to return to work and the impact these closures are having on other aspects of our daily lives. I can assure you that we give great consideration to any decision to close a class, a bubble or in extremis a school; if we need to do this please do co-operate with and support your respective Headteacher. Clearly the successful management of this crisis requires a collective and united response from our whole community and it is important to recognise the role we all have to play in this.

At both school and Trust level we have received a large number of very positive messages from you particularly, in respect of the remote learning provision. They do make a difference in these challenging times and I am grateful to those of you who have taken the time to send such messages. We do appreciate that it is a considerable challenge supporting remote learning at home and thank you for this.

While we remain grateful to the great majority of you for supporting our schools and in following the guidance frequently provided (and copied at the bottom of this letter) unfortunately, a comparatively high number of cases in some schools could have been avoided if all of our families had adhered to published guidelines. Given the shared responsibility we have to our own communities can I please ask you to familiarise yourselves frequently with the aforementioned guidance.



Yesterday also brought the news that schools will continue to be responsible for tracking and tracing cases among staff and pupils beyond the end of term and with it a recommendation that schools close to pupils on Thursday December 17th rather than Friday 18th. It is frustrating that the government has taken so long to agree this decision as there is so little time left for schools and families to make necessary arrangements. Nonetheless we will respond to this untimely communication complicitly as we have with all those previously received. **All Trust schools will therefore close at the normal time on Thursday 17th and Friday 18th December will be a Trust Staff Development Day.** We do apologise for any inconvenience this will cause but like most recent similar scenarios, advice and guidance from central government has not been timely.

We have been requested by the DFE to share the following information with you:

We recommend all schools ensure staff, parents and carers are aware of the following information and relevant arrangements regarding positive cases in the holidays:

- *Where a pupil or staff member tests positive for coronavirus (COVID-19), having developed symptoms more than 48 hours since being in school, the school should not be contacted. Parents and carers should follow contact tracing instructions provided by NHS Test and Trace.*
- *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.*
- *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 a schools last teaching day is on Thursday 17 December, there should be no pupil contact tracing asks beyond Wednesday 23 December.*

For Covid cases please do not contact any of our schools directly after 17th December

Should you need to inform your child's school where the circumstances match those outlined in the second bullet point above, please communicate preferably via the following email address: covidresponse@aaat.uk or alternatively leave a message on 01474 531495. In either case please supply the following information:

School

Name

Year group

Date symptoms began

Date of positive test

Please accept our gratitude for your anticipated understanding of this late change to plans for the end of this term. On behalf of all at Aletheia and those working in each of our schools may I wish you a safe, peaceful and merry Christmas.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Carey". The signature is stylized with loops and flourishes.

Stephen Carey
CEO

Guidance

What to do if your child develops symptoms of COVID 19

If your child develops symptoms of COVID-19, they should remain at home for at least 10 days from the date when their symptoms appeared. Anyone with symptoms will be eligible for testing and this can be arranged via <https://www.nhs.uk/ask-for-a-coronavirus-test> or by calling 119 .

People who do not have symptoms should not request a test unless this has been specifically requested by Public Health England or the local authority.

All other household members who remain well must stay at home and not leave the house for 14 days. This includes anyone in your 'Support Bubble'.

The 14-day period starts from the day when the first person in the house became ill.

Household members should not go to work, school or public areas and exercise should be taken within the home. If you require help with buying groceries, other shopping or picking up medication, or walking a dog, you should ask friends or family. Alternatively, you can order your shopping online and medication by phone or online.

Household members staying at home for 14 days will greatly reduce the overall amount of infection the household could pass on to others in the community

If you are able can, move any vulnerable individuals (such as the elderly and those with underlying health conditions) out of your home, to stay with friends or family for the duration of the home isolation period

Please see the link to the PHE 'Stay at Home' Guidance:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-stay-at-home-guidance/stay-at-home-guidance-for-households-with-possible-coronavirus-covid-19-infection>

Symptoms of COVID 19

The most common symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19) are recent onset of:

- new continuous cough and/or
- high temperature and/or
- a loss of, or change in, normal sense of taste or smell (anosmia)

For most people, coronavirus (COVID-19) will be a mild illness.

If your child does develop symptoms, you can seek advice from the nhs.uk website at <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/check-if-you-have-coronavirus-symptoms/>. If you are concerned about your child's symptoms, or they are worsening you can seek advice from NHS 111 at <https://111.nhs.uk/> or by phoning 111.

How to stop COVID-19 spreading

There are things you can do to help reduce the risk of you and anyone you live with getting ill with COVID-19

Do

- wash your hands with soap and water often – do this for at least 20 seconds
- use hand sanitiser gel if soap and water are not available
- wash your hands as soon as you get home
- cover your mouth and nose with a tissue or your sleeve (not your hands) when you cough or sneeze
- put used tissues in the bin immediately and wash your hands afterwards

Further Information

Further information is available at

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/>