

17 September 2020

Dear Parent / Carer

SOME IMPORTANT INFORMATION

We are trying to balance the need to keep our families informed and communicate key information effectively without constantly bombarding you with emails. Some of the information is quite important and has only come to light since the start of term. I would always prefer much more concise communications but there is so much information to share at the moment – I am just sorry to take up so much of your time!

The issues and challenges faced apply to all schools nationally and are not specific to Roundhay School.

1. **If you or a member of your family has any of the advertised Covid-19 symptoms, please DO NOT send the child into school. It is important that you inform us immediately. Sending a child to school with symptoms could mean that a large number of people are put at risk, or need to be asked to self-isolate for two weeks.** Unfortunately, despite many previous requests, some parents have sent children in who are symptomatic (or live in a household where someone else is symptomatic) and this has contributed to us having to send more children home.
2. If you contact school to inform us of a positive test it is very important that you provide us with the following information:
 - o The date the symptoms began.
 - o The date of the test.
 - o The names of pupils that have been in close contact with your child.
3. Given an increase in local infection rates, and following discussions with the Health Protection Team, our position on masks has evolved. **We now strongly advise that our pupils wear a mask when not in lessons (ie. on corridors and around school). This change will come into effect from Monday 21 September 2020.** It may be that we have to take an even stronger line if Leeds goes into local lockdown at any point, when the wearing of masks will become a statutory requirement. We appreciate your patience as we respond to changing guidance and circumstances.
4. **It is clear that many pupils will, unfortunately, need to be absent from school during the course of this academic year, be that for short or extended periods of time. This is not something that any of us would have wished for or wanted.**
5. We have learnt that confirmation of positive Covid-19 tests can arrive at any time of the day, sometimes late in the evening or over the weekend.

6. We are having to respond to information as soon as it becomes available. This may force us to make a last minute (and very difficult) decision to close bubbles or ask children to remain at home and self-isolate the following day. Regrettably, we may be forced to make this decision at literally any point (late at night, first thing in a morning, over a weekend, etc). Please note that this is totally beyond our control and determined entirely by the point at which the information becomes available.
7. We understand that this creates a real problem for some of our families in terms of childcare, but we will seek to communicate information relevant to your child as soon as we are able to do so. It is likely that this will be via text message in the first instance.
8. In the event of a bubble closure, you will be informed of home learning plans in due course. Please give the school time to respond to a bubble closure and launch the home learning before contacting the school.
9. Schools are operating under **strict instructions** to follow the advice of the Government Health Protection Team (formerly Public Health England).
10. The last thing we ever want to do is send a pupil home from school but we do have a moral obligation to do what we can to curtail the spread of this virus.
11. We have established that the Government Health Protection Team are often too busy to advise us in the evenings or over the weekend.
12. It may be necessary to ask your child to remain at home the following day until we have established contact with the Health Protection Team.
13. At this time they may then advise that:
 - Your child returns to school the following day **or**
 - Your child must self-isolate for a period of 14 days
14. It may be necessary to ask your child to self-isolate, in line with Government guidance, if they have:
 - Been in direct contact: face-to-face contact for any length of time, within 1 metre, including being coughed on, had a face-to-face conversation or unprotected physical contact (skin-to-skin) with an infected individual.
 - Had close proximity contact: extended close contact (within 1 or 2 metres for more than 15 minutes) with an infected individual.
 - Been travelling in a small vehicle, like a car, with an infected individual.
15. In order to reduce unnecessary communication with parents, we will only contact you if your child has come into contact with a suspected case or needs to stay at home for any reason. If we do not contact you, your child should attend school as normal **unless** they are displaying symptoms or have already been advised to self-isolate.
16. If we inform you that your child must self-isolate for a given period, **please do not make contact with school**. We have been inundated with enquiries. Like all schools, we have very limited capacity given the challenges we face and must prioritise the supervision and support required to keep our pupils safe on site.

17. Please note:

- That a decision to send a child is home based on the information we have.
- We are legally unable to reveal the name of any pupil or staff member that has tested positive.
- As we are having to respond swiftly and prioritise safety, we are not in a position to provide lengthy explanations or negotiate such decisions.

18. Overall, our families have been very understanding during a difficult time and we are incredibly grateful for this. Unfortunately, a small number have chosen to post criticism on social media or in WhatsApp groups. **We do ask that people refrain from doing this as it is very unhelpful, causes further anxiety and ignores the fact that we are simply trying to keep our children safe by following the guidance we have been given.** Some people have even contacted us directly and have been incredibly rude / abusive to our staff members. I am sure you will all agree that this is completely unacceptable. In line with our Communication Policy, we will end or not respond to rude or abusive communications. Please remember, we are all doing our best here!

19. We are a school of 2400+ pupils who are having to make decisions in the context of a situation that none of us could have planned for or predicted. We follow the guidance: we care and consider our actions carefully in the interests of our community. However, it is impossible to please all the people, all of the time. We simply ask that this be considered when people judge our decisions and actions. We may not always get everything right but again, we are doing our best in these circumstances.

It is very important to note that, as a state maintained school, we are duty bound to follow UK Government guidance. We therefore respectfully ask that you do not complain to us about such decisions. However, everybody has the democratic right to address concerns directly with the UK Government.

We really appreciate your support, trust and understanding as we navigate a complex and changing situation.

More importantly, we wish you and your family all the very best. Stay well and stay safe.

Yours faithfully



Matthew Partington
Headteacher