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Head Teacher: Shivaun Duffy Moriarty

Dear Parents, Carers, and Families,

We hope this finds you safe and well. I am writing to you following the most recent updates from the government on partial school closures for secondary schools up to 18th of January. The government has now also confirmed that primary schools across London will be partially closed until 18th of January. There are further meetings going on as I write this letter, so the situation may change again. We know that you will have questions and I want to provide you with these key details to try and support you at this most difficult of times.

- 1) Special schools are still listed as open but primary and secondary schools are open to children of key workers and vulnerable children only. Is this because there is less risk of COVID-19 for our school?

No. We have had a small number of positive cases of COVID-19 between September and December. This was with our numerous safety measures in place. Pupils in our school cannot socially distance independently and need support with their self-care and medical interventions. Staff in our school need to work directly with your child in order to facilitate their engagement in learning.

- 2) Is there anything else we can add to our safety measures?

No. We have changed the design of our school, classrooms, timetable and approaches to teaching. We have stopped the use of the full building, visitors on site, cross class learning, offsite learning, and face to face meetings. We have new control measures for transport drop offs, with allocated times for arrival and departure. This is in addition to our bubble safety measures and every classroom having a sink for regular handwashing, antibacterial gel, PPE, 2 meter marking reminders, and daily cleans.

- 3) Will mass testing be in place from 4th January?

No. We have tried to prepare for this over the holidays with the Department for Education guidance that has come through during the break. Our school has 200 pupils and 125 staff. We need to ensure that the way we mass test does not impact on our bubble systems. We have not received the test kits or other resources from the DfE, that are necessary to prepare for this. We have been told to be ready for mass testing during the week of 11th January 2021. We will be sending further information out to you all next week when we are given more clarity and guidance on this. The current guidance states:



“Special schools, specialist colleges and AP should remain open to allow all pupils and students to attend from the start of term. Some pupils and students, for example if they are clinically extremely vulnerable and live in tier 4, are currently being advised by the Department of Health and Social Care not to attend their educational setting. Education settings are being offered access to additional coronavirus (COVID-19) testing so that their secondary age pupils can be tested, reaching as many as possible as soon as is practicable.

All secondary age children and young people in special schools, specialist colleges and AP who want to attend their education setting should be allowed to attend from the first day of term (on or after Monday 4 January 2021), whether or not they have had a test. We remain committed to supporting and prioritising this group of children and young people. We do recognise the additional operational and logistical challenges that these settings face in rolling out testing.

Schools have the option of agreeing with parents that individual pupils can stay at home. This could help to support special schools and AP to mobilise the mass testing programme in the first week of term. The aim should be that all pupils in special schools and AP are back in school by the second week of term (on or after 11 January 2021). In maintained special schools, pupil referral units and non-maintained special schools parents would need to request a leave of absence for their child. This would be recorded as Code C: ‘leave of absence authorised by the school’. This must not be a blanket decision across the setting and should be agreed on a case-by-case basis with parents or the young person.”

- 4) Will I be fined if I do not send my child into school on the first week back from Monday 4th Jan 2021 as they are clinically extremely vulnerable, or I am worried that testing is not in place so there may be a greater risk of infection.

No. We respect any decision that any family takes. You would not be fined. As the guidance above states you will need to request that your child does not attend school for this first week.

We are asking you to help us with our planning for the start of the new term and we respect any views you have. Please contact me on, smoriarty@sherbournefields.coventry.sch.uk, to inform me if you have decided to keep your child away from school because they are either extremely clinically vulnerable or you are waiting on testing in schools to be put in place.

If I receive further guidance from the local authority or the DfE, later today or tomorrow, which has an impact on the situation I will contact you once again. Please stay safe and be reassured that we continue to be passionate about both the education and safety of all of our pupils.

Yours Sincerely,

Shivaun Duffy Moriarty

Head Teacher

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