

4 November 2020

Dear Parent/Carers

Covid-19 Update

From Thursday, 5 November Covid-19 restrictions in England will be tightened. However, schools will remain open to all students. We strongly agree that it is vital students continue to attend school. Not doing so poses a significant risk to your child's education, future life chances and their wellbeing. Outlined below are a number of updates that I hope you will find useful.

Covid Cases

I would like to acknowledge that the start of this academic year has been challenging for the whole school community. New systems have been established and when we have had cases of the virus we have had to respond quickly. Currently, the school have had 13 confirmed cases with 8 having a direct impact on the wider school community resulting in other students needing to self-isolate. Within the national context, this is below average but has still presented challenges. We have also had 1 staff case which has resulted in other staff being required to self-isolate. Over the half term we dealt with 3 student cases and made contact with those affected. We have responded to a number of concerns regarding the delay in communicating this to parent/carers. Unfortunately, these delays are unavoidable. The school relies on parent/carers of a child with the virus contacting us in a timely fashion. The 14 day isolation period also starts from the last time the infected person was in contact with others. Therefore, I ask that parent/carers continue to let the school know as soon as possible if their child tests positive to the virus.

I would also like to provide some clarification around single cases or linked cases. The school has been in regular communication with the DfE and health professionals supporting the Local Authority. Based on the available evidence at the time, the cases we have had have been identified as a single case or the cases have not had an impact on the school as a student has already been self-isolating. As I am sure parent/carers appreciate, determining the source of infection is incredibly challenging particularly when you factor in that there will be asymptomatic people who will not show any symptoms.

Face Coverings

The best way that we can continue to keep the whole community safe is for everyone to follow the control measures that are in place. In particular, I should highlight the use of public transport. Realistically, some students have to travel to school via bus however, it is really important that face masks are worn at all times and that students avoid eating and drinking whilst travelling.

Before half term we introduced the expectation that face coverings should be worn in all internal communal areas. The vast majority of students have adapted incredibly well including those with exception cards. It is disappointing that we have had a few cases where students have not been compliant about wearing a face covering. They are there to protect everyone and I would ask that all parent/carers have a further conversation with their child about the importance of wearing a face covering. We also have a small minority of students who have been arriving at school without a face covering. There is an expectation that parent/carers provide these for their child. The school does have spares and will give these out if one is damaged.

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Educational settings do have a different set of expectations in terms of group sizes and social distancing within bubbles. I fully understand that for some parent/carers it is difficult to understand this and I hope as a school we have clarified how our year groups bubbles work. In school students are kept separate from other year group bubbles. Where it gets more challenging to keep students separate is when they leave school. Therefore, I would ask that parent/carers also have a conversation with their child about not congregating at the gates and keeping their social distance from different year group bubbles. Students should also limit their group size to no more than 6 when travelling to and from school.

6th Form Arrangements

From Thursday there will be some changes to the current 6th Form arrangements. We need to limit non-essential travel and this will mean that students will not be able to leave site during the school day. The updated government guidance also states that shopping 'for basic necessities, for example food and medicine, should be as infrequent as possible'. Therefore, please support your child so that they do not need to go to Tesco or one of the corner shops everyday. I have met today with Chartwells, the school's catering company and we will be making some positive changes; increasing the range of food available and providing more hot food. Initially, these changes will benefit Years 8, 9 and 10 and we are working with Chartwells to provide additional resources so that students in Years 7, 11 and the 6th Form can access a wider selection of food in their bubbles. A further letter about school catering will be sent home.

Parent Consultation Evenings

Until further notice we will not be having face to face parent consultation evenings. Instead these will be conducted remotely and you will be contacted via phone. The school is looking at video conferencing but at this time the infrastructure does not exist in school.

Behaviour Expectations

This academic year we have seen further improvements in student behaviour and in the future when we return to a more normal way of working we will retain some of the systems currently in place. One way we have raised our expectations is through stopping students from making physical contact with others. This helps promote a calm environment. At changeover of lessons within bubbles corridors can be busy and it is really important that students walk calmly and follow the rule of walking on the left.

Remote Learning

It is important that as a school we are prepared for further restrictions or situations where students are not able to attend school every day. At the moment this may happen as a result of a positive student case or if we have high staff absence. Our primary responsibility is to ensure that your child and staff are safe and if staffing levels put this at risk then we will need to consider implementing a rota system. We are prepared for this but I would ask that parent/carers check that their child can access their school Google email account and have signed up to their virtual classrooms. It is also essential that the school has up to date email addresses of parent/carers as increasingly this is the most effective way to communicate with home. If your child needs support accessing on line learning or you need to update your contact email address please send an email to enquiries@wellingschool-tkat.org

Support Available

These are anxious times for everyone and it is important that all members of the school community are sympathetic towards the way people may be feeling. When students are travelling to and from school they are also representing the school and I would appreciate it if you could remind your child to be considerate of others. We have also seen significant demand for the support we have in place to help students. If your child is struggling with school or there is a particular issue please contact your child's Care & Guidance Assistant in the first instance. We also have a team of staff, including members of the senior team, attached to each year group and they can also be contacted for support.

Finally, I do want to thank all parent/carers for working with the school at this challenging time. The messages of support we have received have been positive and I hope that those parent/carers that have contacted the school with concerns have received a response. The school remains committed to working with all our parent/carers and I encourage you contact relevant staff directly or via the email above.

With very best wishes.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'R. Pett', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Mr R Pett
Headteacher