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9th December 2020

Dear Parent/Carer

In the lead up to the Christmas holidays, it is vitally important that we all behave as vigilantly as possible in our efforts to keep each other as safe as possible. Therefore, we would urge parents to keep your child off school and get them tested as soon as possible if they show any of the less common symptoms of COVID-19 as well as the classic symptoms of loss of taste or smell, high temperature or persistent cough. The less common symptoms are:

**• Headaches**

**• Aches and pains**

**• Tiredness/Fatigue**

**• Sore throat**

**• Runny nose**

**• Sneezing**

**• Upset stomach**

Although official guidance suggests that everyone with less common symptoms should carry on as normal until they get a test, we think this is unwise when these less common symptoms seem to be more indicative of a positive case amongst young people than the classic symptoms. Therefore, the wise course of action is to treat these less common symptoms as seriously as the classic ones by isolating and getting tested as soon as they are displayed.

Our recent ‘circuit break’ appears to have been successful in stopping a surge in cases in its tracks. However, moving forward, we need to redouble our efforts and do everything we can to make sure that no one receives the upsetting news in the last week of term that they are having to self-isolate through the Christmas holidays because someone came into school with lesser symptoms and then tested positive.

If you are needing to get a test for yourself or a family member, headteachers have been asked to share the following information with parents. However, please be warned that this new system doesn’t yet appear to be well-established and you may need to go through the usual test process which returns results within 1-3 days.

**Staffordshire is one of several local authorities which has signed up for the early roll-out of new ‘rapid turnaround’ tests and there is an opportunity to use these with schools and sixth forms that are interested. National testing centres across the county have good availability and can be booked through the Gov.Uk Testing Website.**

**Staffordshire also has a range of community testing sites that change on a weekly basis. You can book a precautionary test at one of these sites, even if you aren’t displaying the classic symptoms, by visiting Staffordshire’s Community Test Sites Website**

As we come towards the end of this very long, very challenging term, we would like to thank all parents and carers AGAIN for your incredible patience and understanding as we have all tried to manage the unmanageable together. We would also like to urge you all to be extremely cautious and vigilant, as aforementioned, in this run-up to Christmas.

In the New Year we will continue following the current pattern for the school week with school finishing on Friday at 1.30pm. Please don’t forget that should you require child care from 1.30 to 3.30 this can be provided. Please contact your school to book a place should you require it. For those schools that offer Care Club, the normal arrangements still apply.

All Trust schools will close on Friday 18th December 2020 at 1.30 (3.30/4.30 for those parents who require after school care at The Howard, Richard Crosse and St. Mary’s) and not on Thursday 17th as mentioned in the media.

May I take this opportunity of wishing everyone a very safe and merry Christmas and a happy New Year. Let’s hope that 2021 is better than 2020!

With very best wishes,



**Mr P J Lovern**

**Chief Executive Officer**