22nd September 2020

Dear Parent/Carer

Welcome back to another school year! Our school leaders have been working incredibly hard to ready schools for children and are delighted to see pupils back. During the final week of the holiday, all of our schools have had their Risk Assessments signed off from an external Health and Safety Company who visited each site and met with leaders to ensure the highest standards for pupils return on Tuesday 8th September.

As I am sure you will be aware, Kirklees has moved back into the restrictions for high transmission areas. It is worthwhile noting that communities within our immediate area are affected by increasing transmission rates so it is important for our communities to adhere to the new guidance which can be found here <https://www.kirklees.gov.uk/beta/health-and-well-being/covid19-restrictions.aspx>

For most people, Coronavirus is a mild illness, but we continue to help our older children to understand their role in protecting others who may be more vulnerable. Our children have been a credit in the way they have embraced change and shown enormous resilience and care for others.

**Attendance:**

As a Trust, we share a common Attendance Policy with the Shelley Pyramid of schools which applies to the management of absence in schools and adheres to Government guidance. However, in light of COVID-19, we have added a temporary appendix to our Attendance Policy:

* We expect all children to return to school unless a clinician has advised otherwise; they are unwell or self-isolating as advised by the guidance.
* We will work with families who are concerned and conduct Risk Assessments for children/families with vulnerabilities.
* Our aim is to work proactively with families who are concerned about the virus to provide the necessary reassurance in order for children to return to school.

Children who are self-isolating are expected to access remote learning and all schools will write to parents shortly to outline the remote learning provision in place. The full attendance policy is available on each school’s website.

**Reporting absence:**

If your child is not attending school on any given day, please follow the normal notification procedures and report absence as early as possible. Schools will need to know if your child is:

* Unwell
* Displaying symptoms of coronavirus and awaiting a test
* Self-isolating as someone else in the household has symptoms or they have been advised to by track and trace.

**What happens if my child is unwell with coronavirus symptoms?**

It is really important that we all follow the guidance laid out by the Government. The Guidance lays out the following requirements:

***Children who display symptoms should not be sent to school****.*

If anyone in the school becomes unwell with:

* a new and persistent cough,
* or a high temperature,
* or has a loss of or change in, their normal sense of taste or smell (anosmia),

they must be sent home by schools and advised to follow [guidance for households with possible or confirmed coronavirus (COVID-19) infection](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-stay-at-home-guidance), which sets out that they should self-isolate for at least 10 days and should [arrange to have a test](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-getting-tested) to see if they have coronavirus (COVID-19). (The links will allow families to find out more information)

If your child has tested positive whilst not experiencing symptoms but develops symptoms during the isolation period, they should restart the 10-day isolation period from the day they develop symptoms.

Other members of their household (including any siblings) should self-isolate for 14 days from when the symptomatic person first had symptoms.

**What will happen whilst my child is waiting for collection?**

If a child is awaiting collection, they will be moved, if possible, to a room where they can be isolated behind a closed door, depending on the age and needs of the child, with appropriate adult supervision if required. Ideally, a window will be opened for ventilation. If it is not possible to isolate them, they will be moved to an area which is at least 2 metres away from other people.

If they need to go to the bathroom while waiting to be collected, they will use a separate bathroom if possible. The bathroom will be cleaned and disinfected using standard cleaning products before being used by anyone else.

PPE will be worn by staff caring for the child while they await collection if a distance of 2 metres cannot be maintained (such as for a very young child or a child with complex needs).

There are a number of ‘myths’ circulating. I can reassure parents, that we do not conduct tests at school and all unwell children will be cared for and reassured whilst adhering to the necessary protective measures.

If a ‘bubble’ is sent home during the school day, they will be kept as a group away from other children whilst awaiting collection.

**Test outcome:**

We would ask all parents to contact school with the result of a coronavirus test. **If a pupil tests negative and** if they feel well and no longer have symptoms similar to coronavirus (COVID-19), they can stop self-isolating and return to school. If the pupil remains unwell following the test (such as with a different illness), then they will be recorded as unwell in the normal way.

**If a pupil tests positive,** they should continue to self-isolate for at least 10 days from the onset of their symptoms. They should only return to school if they do not have symptoms other than a cough or loss of sense of smell or taste (anosmia). This is because a cough or anosmia can last for several weeks once the infection has gone.

Whilst self-isolating, pupils’ absence will not be recorded as unwell. The Government have asked school to use an ‘X’ code to show a pupil is self-isolating and accessing work at home. Schools are required to change the mark to unwell once the test result comes back.

**How are positive results handled in school?**

When parents inform us of a positive test result, they are behaving incredibly responsibly and enabling our schools to keep our whole community safe. It is important that we all respect the confidentiality of any children and staff with positive results and avoid speculation on social media as this can serve as a deterrent to reporting which is detrimental to us all.

Parents should email the school out of hours immediately or telephone in the school day. The contact information for your child’s school is:

In all schools, the guidance asks that we consult with Public Health England. Schools now have their own dedicated phone line to make this process quicker. Whilst awaiting confirmation from PHE, schools will take quick action to isolate anybody who may have been in close contact with the person concerned. This may mean that parents are asked to collect children from school or to not send them in the next day. I am sure parents will appreciate that this will depend on when we are notified of the result and it is really important that we work together as a community to act quickly in the interests of everyone.

Once advice has been confirmed with Public Health Officials, schools will contact parents with confirmation as to which children need to commence the 14 day isolation period (which begins from the day your child last had contact with the infected person). **Please be aware that the self-isolation period of 14 days, is compulsory and only children who develop symptoms need to access a test.**

**And finally…**

We understand that sometimes parents will want some additional clarification. There is information on our school websites from the Local Authority with different scenarios to help you make the right decision. We have also attached this information for your use. Our schools are happy to help, but please check this guidance first as the phone lines can become incredibly busy.

Thank you to all our families for your continued support.

Kind regards

Mrs N Greenough, CEO The Mast Academy Trust