



11th January 2021

Dear Parent/Guardian,

I wanted to write to you all as we progress into this half term to make you aware of certain issues. We are receiving daily, updated guidance from government and, like you, find ourselves in an increasingly difficult situation, not of our own making, but in response to which we are working hard to support you and your child(ren) as best we can.

Thank you so much to those of you, who are once again embracing the role of home schooling, assisting your child(ren) to engage fully with the on-line learning programmes provided. We recognise just how difficult this can be. For some, we know you feel there might be too much work set, whilst for others this is too little. We are working to government instruction currently with prescribed minimum hours of education to deliver and will share with you further explanation of our specific expectations in relation to remote education. Indeed, we would like to offer to support you however we can, so please do advise us.

Headteachers have been asked to address three competing priorities: to deliver remote education to a required standard; to cater for children of critical workers and our most vulnerable children on site; and to maintain the intended public health impact of the Stay At Home order. To deliver the first two of these, teachers need to run programmes, remote and in-school, alongside each other as they cannot do both at the same time to the quality desired. As such, there will be a blend of teacher input, sometimes delivered live, whilst other input will be recorded for access at any time in order to accommodate parent/guardian work schedules, and other family commitments. Our schools do plan, however, to provide live pastoral sessions, which will focus on social interaction.

Whilst all that may be difficult to manage, it is the third priority, which poses the most challenge, as restricting movement and pupil contact may be compromised by the growing numbers of pupils in the school building. I know that your individual Headteachers will have written to you, clarifying the sheer numbers of pupils we still have in school and the government has today asked us to report in more detail on those pupils attending. Without further restrictions, we will not achieve the reduced transmission of the virus we hope for and the longer this dreadful situation may continue.

I understand how simply fed up with all this you might feel and it is clear that the length of lockdown limitations on regular life has taken its toll on us all. We are, however, in a different place in this lockdown, as we are facing a much stronger, new strain of the virus that is spreading more quickly and contributing to the worsening picture you hear in the daily news. The NHS is under increasing pressure and says “we now need to use every lever at our disposal to reduce all our social contacts wherever possible.” Our most recently received guidance states that “parents and carers who are critical workers should keep their children at home if they can”, but this may not go far enough in supporting schools that are facing acute capacity issues if parents choose not to support the essence of what is trying to be achieved.



The overarching principle to apply is the reduction of the number of contacts between children. In our primary settings especially, all staff are in schools to accommodate the pupil numbers attending, but we are beginning to struggle to keep group sizes small and, therefore, to limit the risk to families.

As a result, I must ask, if you are a 'critical worker', that you review your own situation, as to how critical your role may be and how essential it is for your child(ren) to attend school at this current time. In the best interest of your child(ren) and others, I ask that you only make use of the in-school emergency provision, if it is absolutely necessary and if you have no alternative childcare arrangements. I apologise to you all for the potential implications of this approach, but we are all only trying to do our very best in a very challenging situation. I empathise greatly with those of you that are not critical workers and are still trying to work to support your family.

We have reviewed our Risk Assessments accordingly and will strive to maintain a Covid-secure environment. We are following instruction from government and plan to introduce lateral flow testing in the high schools, which should reassure both staff and pupils of this. Our hope is that this will allow us to improve our response to positive cases and limit disruption for you. We are also planning longer-term to ensure we are ready to support you as soon as restrictions are reduced. This is currently set to be after the February half term.

With regards to exams, whilst we were relieved, on behalf of Year 6, 11 and 13 students, to hear that we will not have SATs, GCSEs and A Levels this year, due to the limited time pupils have had in school, our focus is now on getting the best for our children's future in both helping those in examination year groups to achieve their next steps in education successfully, but also to target the Years 5, 10 and 12, who most likely will take exams in 2022. We understand how many students have felt let down by the government's approach and the lateness of decisions. We will support our students as best we can and it is for that reason that we continued to offer the BTEC exams in an attempt to provide a good balance for those who wanted an opportunity to show how hard they had worked, whilst protecting others who felt they had not had the preparation they deserved. Again, please do contact us if you have issues related to this, but rest assured that sixth form places in our own schools will be available to Year 11.

I would like to thank you for your patience, support and cooperation as we work together to get through this very frustrating and challenging time. Please do not hesitate to contact us should you have any concerns, this should be your own school in the first instance. I wish you all a healthy and successful 2021.

Yours faithfully,



Jon Wright,

Chief Executive Officer,
Omega Multi-Academy Trust.