



Dear Parents and Carers,

Friday 8th October 2021

Unfortunately, as I am sure you are all aware, we have recently been managing an increasing number of Covid cases in school. Community infection rates are high and nationally, cases have risen by nearly 20%. East Cambridgeshire features in the top 20 list of areas where infection rates are rising most quickly. Indeed, East Cambridgeshire, Huntingdonshire and Fenland are each showing higher rates of infections than both the East of England and England averages to September 28th. More than 50% of recent infections in all areas of Cambridgeshire and Peterborough are in the 0 – 17 age group.

To date this academic year, we have had 15 positive pupil cases, and 6 positive staff cases at Rackham. In all but three of these cases, the virus was contracted via a household contact. We have worked extremely hard to isolate the cases within school.

We would like to thank parents for their support when we request that children have a PCR test. We appreciate that this may be an inconvenience at times, however this approach has helped us find positive cases of covid that might otherwise have gone undetected, and we have thankfully managed to isolate all cases within school to date. Please can I politely request that parents remain courteous when speaking to staff at Rackham. We understand the anxieties and frustrations everyone is feeling, but that is never an excuse to be rude to any staff member who is doing their best to protect our children and the community.

We have liaised with the Local Authority and Public Health England frequently in recent weeks and they have confirmed to us that we have sufficient procedures in place to limit infection rates within school. On Wednesday 6th October, the Local Authority advised all schools to consider more robust action in light of the surging cases in and around Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. The Service Director for Education, Jonathan Lewis strongly recommended:

- A reintroduction of face coverings for pupils and staff in communal spaces in secondary schools and for staff in Primary schools,
- Staff to socially distance from each other within school buildings,
- Virtual staff meetings and assemblies,
- All visitors to schools must wear face coverings in school buildings,
- Virtual events where parents might ordinarily visit the school,
- Secondary schools should promote and monitor uptake of twice weekly LFD testing and Covid-19 vaccinations for all staff and pupils,
- Primary school staff to continue taking twice weekly LFD testing

I am pleased to report that these precautions have been in place at Rackham since the beginning of September and that we do not need to make any alterations to our existing covid response procedures. 100% of staff at Rackham are LFD testing twice weekly, all staff remain socially distanced from one another and have remained in separate staff rooms since September and all staff wear face coverings in communal areas. Our Collective Worship has remained remote as have all staff meetings. It has been this way at Rackham since the beginning of March 2020.

In addition to these measures, we have maintained staggered starts and end times for the school day, and we are keeping all rooms within the building well ventilated. Please ensure your children are dressed warmly

with layers as the temperatures begin to drop because ventilation remains one of the best ways to reduce in school transmission.

Our staggered start / end times are working well, and we are grateful to our parents for working with us to make these effective. We ask parents who are comfortable doing so to consider wearing a face covering if they are in a crowded area on the school site, but this is of course at your discretion. What we do ask is that if you may have been in contact with a positive case or someone awaiting a test result that you wear a face covering in order to protect others – we can obviously not enforce this, but it is a recommendation.

[Government Guidance](#) prioritises keeping children in school but states that all close contacts of positive cases need to book a PCR test immediately and so we ask that all families continue to work with us and book tests when recommended. We are aware that some parents have been given misleading advice from Track and Trace following household contacts, and we ask that parents communicate with the school in these circumstances. The table below details the definition of close contacts. This is the criteria we are using in school for telephoning parents and advising that their children get a PCR test.

DEFINITIONS	
Close Contacts	Infectious Period
Direct Physical Contact (any duration)	If symptomatic: 2 clear days before day on which symptoms start, and for ten days after.
Close contact under 1 metre for 1 minute or more	
1 – 2 metres for 15 minutes or more (cumulative over 24 hours)	No symptoms: 2 clear days before the day of the test, and for ten days afterwards.
Travel in a vehicle	

Whilst contact tracing is no longer the responsibility of schools, at Rackham we will continue to notify parents when we identify their children as close contacts within school. If you do not wish for us to contact you in these circumstances, please let us know via the school office email.

Please note, children who are aged under 5 years old who are identified as close contacts will only be advised to take a PCR test by Track and Trace if the positive case is in their own household.

In addition to these measures (that we have had in place at Rackham since the start of the pandemic) we encourage households to take regular lateral flow tests in line with national guidance. If you need help accessing these tests, please let us know and we will be more than happy to help. Please note that Lateral Flow tests are not recommended for primary aged pupils, and they are not recommended for individuals who have symptoms. Several of the positive cases at Rackham have only shown as positive on LFD tests a few days after the positive PCR result.

Lastly, we ask that you please look out for wider symptoms of Covid-19 such as a sore throat, flu-like symptoms, headache, tummy ache and muscle aches. These symptoms are in addition to the more common symptoms and have been widely reported in children both at Rackham and across the country.

Please be assured that despite the recent increase in positive cases in and around Rackham, we continue to follow the latest national guidance in collaboration with advice from Public Health England and the Local Authority. We will continue to monitor the situation closely and keep everyone updated over the coming weeks.

I would like again to thank the fantastic staff at Rackham for continuing to work tirelessly in very challenging circumstances. As always, we thank our school community for continuing to support us throughout the pandemic. We understand your frustrations and are grateful for your patience and understanding.

