

18 September 2020

Dear Parent/Carer,

As I write, we have had two full weeks of students back to school and we have been delighted with the maturity of the students adapting to the new routines and expectations. Our staggered starts/finishes and breaks/lunch are working well and students are really appreciating less busy dining halls, as year groups are not mixing. Thank you to parents for supporting us with the changes to arrangements this week. I am pleased to report that, due to the combined efforts of students, staff and parents the streets around school are much clearer. We have received several positive pieces of feedback regarding new arrangements – thank you for your feedback.

I am writing to provide some information **in advance** of any positive cases of COVID-19 at Unity Academy. This is to provide advance notice not a response to a specific situation.

What could happen if the school becomes aware of a positive case?

You will have seen in the news over the last couple of days that there have been many hundreds of schools having to close partially or, even in some cases, fully. Therefore, I write to prepare you for what **could** happen if we were officially informed by a parent that their child had tested positive for COVID-19 or if we had a member of staff test positive. **We will only act when a parent or staff members confirms to the school that they have received a positive result. If a parent chooses to post on social media prior to informing the academy, we cannot act until the parent informs the academy. If your child tests positive, please tell the academy without delay and before posting to social media.**

If we were informed officially of such a case in our staff or student body, the first thing we would do is follow the government guidance and call the Health Protection Team (HPT) within the Department for Education. I will discuss with the HPT the controls we have in place, which you can read in our Risk Assessment on our website, to determine what the next steps should be. In terms of a student testing positive, this would likely mean that the year group of that student would need to move to remote learning for a period of time defined by the HPT. This could be up to two weeks. I have used the word **could** above as the response from the HPT is not set in stone, so I am only discussing what we believe is likely. **The time frame will be established based on the date the symptoms began and not the date of the test result.**

The decision to partially close the school in any way will not be made in isolation and will be made following discussions with our Executive Headteacher and **not before we have discussed it fully with the local Health Protection Team.** I am told that after the initial contact, it can take up to 3 hours for the HPT to call the school back for the full discussion and

for a decision to be made. The final decision will be made by the HPT and the school will follow the instructions given. If children in the affected year group are in school, we will keep them in school until we have carefully notified parents of our actions.

Therefore, it is very important that you are clear on the following:

- If a child tests positive, the parent/carer should contact the school immediately to let us know. They should not discuss it with anyone else and **certainly not put it on social media**. The school will only make a decision after discussion with the HPT. **The school are instructed on the actions to take at this stage. We have no choice but to follow the instructions given.**
- The school will inform you of any closure partially or otherwise only by
 - Text message
 - Message on our school website
 - Email address if we have it
 - Letter with students (if they are in school)
 - Copies of the letter on the website.

Therefore, it is very important that we have up to date contact details for you including email addresses and mobile numbers. A test message has been sent via text message and email today (Friday). If you have received these you need to take no further action. If you have not received either of these messages please contact: -

admin@unity.fcat.org.uk

stating your child's full name, tutor group or class and contact mobile number. Then we will add the email address this was sent from to your child's contact details.

The time of day that we actually have the discussion with the HPT will determine how we facilitate a year group moving to remote learning.

If this decision is made in the evening or the weekend then we will inform all parents of the affected year group by the above means clarifying the length of the self-isolation period (time not in school) and this will be followed by an official letter.

If the decision happens during the day then:

- if it is close to the end of the day we will hand out letters to the affected year groups before they leave for the day.
- If it is earlier in the day then we will contact parents to discuss how their child is going to return home and we will put extra social distancing measures in place between those students until their return home has been arranged.

If the decision is taken to close partially or fully, then children of keyworkers will also need to self-isolate.

Children showing symptoms

I am also going to take the opportunity to reiterate the current advice from the Director of Public Health for Blackpool that was published in the Blackpool Gazette on Friday. It stated that as well as the main potential symptoms for COVID-19 which are

- A new persistent cough
- A high temperature
- Loss of taste or smell

There are other symptoms that we should err on the side of caution when deciding whether to send your unwell child to school which are

- Extreme tiredness, that is not obviously the result of a lack of sleep
- New aches or pains which are unexplained
- Sore throat
- Diarrhoea
- Headaches
- Conjunctivitis
- Rashes on the skin or discolouration of fingers or toes
- Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath
- Chest pain or pressure
- Loss of speech or movement

This does mean that if we are assessing students in school and we feel that a child meets any of the above criteria then we will look to contact parents/carers and arrange them to be picked up. We are not doctors, so we will make judgements based on the advice we have been given. If you are called and asked to pick-up your child, then please come as soon as you can for obvious reasons and you will need to bring a mask to adhere to our policy when entering reception.

Can I remind you that the guidance states that if any member of your household develops one of the three main symptoms above then that person as well as the rest of the household should isolate for 14 days and the person showing symptoms should arrange to be tested. We do understand the difficulty in obtaining tests.

Remote learning

If in the event of a partial closure or that a particular household needs to isolate, we can assure you that remote learning plans are in place to commence work immediately.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "S. Cooke". The letters are cursive and fluid, with a large initial 'S' and a distinct 'C'.

Mr. S. Cooke
Headteacher