

Wellfield High School

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Mrs L A Gwinnett, Executive Head
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Dear Parents,

As we enter another national lockdown, we recognise that there will be anxiety around how the school intends to balance the health and safety of all staff and students with our desire to remain open in such challenging circumstances.

Keeping Wellfield High School open to all students since September, and keeping the infection and transmission rates of the virus as low as we have been able to has required a huge commitment from staff, students and families. We thank you for supporting us with this. We also know that being able to attend school does provide stability for all our staff and students during these very uncertain times.

Having said that, creating a safe environment in all areas of our schools throughout the day and securing calm measures to ensure all students move around the school safely has been reliant on very high staff attendance.

Staff absence, when it occurs, creates significant ongoing challenges, particularly with local infection rates continuing to remain as high as they currently are. We continue to work closely with Public Health England (PHE), Lancashire County Council (LCC) and the Department for Education (DfE) so that we are able to respond swiftly to any new guidance and advice that we receive.

Staff absence can occur suddenly and within the school day if a 'track and trace' notification comes through. As you will be aware, this then leads to 14 days' isolation at home. This is also the case if staff with young children have their own children sent home and have no other available childcare. So far we have largely managed to cover this internally, although it has been difficult. As with many schools, we have avoided using external staff who are not already known to us for obvious Health and Safety reasons.

Yesterday, on the eve of the second national lockdown, new guidance included an update for our Clinically Extremely Vulnerable members of staff who were formerly shielding. Those staff have been written to by the Government requesting that they now resume shielding and work from home in order to more fully protect them from coronavirus. These new shielding measures are being applied nationally for 4 weeks up to 2 December in the first instance.

This important guidance will have further impact on our already stretched staff attendance. With reduced numbers of staff in school, this means that we will not be able to support all year groups being in school whilst also securing the highest standards of health and safety in our classrooms and in all areas around the school.

As a result, from Monday 9th November, the school will be moving to a rota system, with a single year group out of school for any given week for the period of lockdown. With the possibility that this may extend until the school term finishes on Friday 18th December, we are planning ahead for this, but will obviously revert back if it is not needed. This should give parents time to plan ahead.

Students working from home will have access to remote learning via Classcharts. The rota will affect Year 8, Year 9 and Year 10. Year 7 and Year 11 will remain in school full-time until the end of term, as long as there are no major outbreaks in these year groups.

Our reasoning is that Year 11 are currently engaged in their final year of their GCSEs. For Year 7 we are still in the crucial first term of their transition from primary to secondary school and being in school is essential to support this.

It must be stressed, that these measures have been put in place to manage the current and further anticipated levels of staff absence arising from the updated guidance. Should this level of absence increase in the event of further staff contracting the virus, having to self-isolate or provide childcare, there will be a need to broaden the number of year groups out of school.

The following schedule provides details, as things currently stand on which year group will be out of school on any particular week for the remainder of this term

Week Beginning	Year Group out of school	Return to school date
9 th November	Year 10	16 th November
16 th November	Year 9	23 rd November
23 rd November	Year 8	30 th November
30 th November	Year 10	7 th December
7 th December	Year 9	14 th December
14 th December	Year 8	5 th January 2021

We will be informing all students of our plans and reiterating our high expectations of engagement in home learning and how we can continue to support and monitoring their learning remotely.

We will be contacting the parents of vulnerable children and children of critical workers who attended school during the lockdown period across the summer term and offering provision to access supervised remote learning in school.

Should any students not engage with the remote learning we reserve the right to request they attend school and provision will be made for them to access the learning in school. If there are any concerns regarding students access to devices or the internet during this period, please inform us as soon as possible.

Students who are usually in receipt of free school meals will receive a voucher during the week they are working from home.

Should there be the need to widen restrictions, this will be implemented in a phased manner, with as much notice given to you as circumstances allow. As always we continue to monitor the national and local picture and follow advice from Lancashire County Council and Department for Education.

It is with much regret that we are having to put these measures in place but would like to reassure you that as best we can, we will try to minimise the disruption and only move to further year groups being out of school if absolutely necessary.

We continue to appreciate your support and should you have any further questions regarding the contents of this letter, please contact us directly using enquiries@whs.lancs.sch.uk

Yours sincerely

Mr J Lewis

Mr J Lewis
Head of School