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Chief Executive: Simon Beamish, BA (Hons) MSc PGCE NPQH NLE

Thursday, 17 September 2020

Dear parents and carers,

RE: your child's attendance at school.

Over the last three weeks, it has been wonderful to see pupils return to school to resume their education and to reunite them with their friends and members of staff. Of course, this process has not been easy and ensuring our academies are Covid-secure has taken a considerable amount of time and resources to get right. This letter is intended to echo and reinforce the important messages about attendance that your child's Principal will have sent to you recently.

Since returning we have been evaluating the measures we have in place to ensure that we continue to prioritise safety for the benefit of the whole community. Social distancing, hand-washing and (in some cases) mask-wearing are now everyday elements of the academy day and we anticipate they will be around for some time to come.

Across our group of twenty-eight schools, we have had a very small number of pupils and staff testing positive for Covid-19 and in conjunction with Public Health England we have taken swift action to contact stakeholders, isolate others and ensure that cross-transmission does not occur. All of the cases we have experienced so far have been via transmission outside of school; to date we have not had any cases of transmission within school which is proof that the measures we have in place are working effectively. Please be assured that if a confirmed case does occur we will notify all parents in the academy as soon as possible with specific advice and guidance.

Over the coming months, it is increasingly likely that pupils will suffer from seasonal colds and flu. This will make identifying those with Covid-19 more difficult and it is therefore important to know the difference so you as parents can make informed decisions about whether to send your child to school or whether you should self-isolate them and arrange for a Covid test.

The main symptoms of coronavirus to watch for are:

- **a high temperature** – this means you feel hot to touch on your chest or back. If using a thermometer then it would generally be considered high if it is over 37.8 degrees;
- **a new, continuous cough** – this means coughing a lot for more than an hour, or three or more coughing episodes in 24-hours (if you usually have a cough, it may be worse than usual); and/or
- **a loss or change to your sense of smell or taste** – this means you've noticed you cannot smell or taste anything, or things smell or taste different to normal.

If your child has **one or more** of these symptoms and they do not have other symptoms associated with a cold or flu (see below) then you should keep them at home in **self-isolation for 14 days from the first day symptoms appear** and arrange for a test as soon as possible. It also means that the rest of the household should self-isolate including siblings in other classes/schools.

If the result is negative then they can return to school immediately. However, **if the test result is positive, self-isolation should continue in line with government guidance and the school should be informed immediately by phone so that we can act to protect others with whom your child may have had contact.** If you receive a positive result out of school hours then please email the school immediately so that we can act quickly and take appropriate action.

If your child does not have any of the above symptoms then you DO NOT NEED to send them to be tested and if they are fit and well they should come to school as normal. We are aware of the current problems with testing capacity and the frustration that this is causing, but it is important that we do not add to the problem and therefore only arrange tests where there are clear symptoms present.

The following symptoms are not usually associated with Covid-19 and therefore are more likely to indicate a different condition:

Sneezing – this is most commonly associated with a cold or an allergy;

Body aches - this is most commonly associated with cold or flu;

Headache - this is most commonly associated with a flu;

Sore throat - this is most commonly associated with a cold;

Runny nose - this is most commonly associated with a cold; and

Diarrhoea - this is most commonly associated with flu or a gastro infection.

If your child has one or more of these symptoms then it is less likely to be Covid-19 and you should use parental judgement to decide if they are fit to attend school or not. If you are unsure and they present with these symptoms and Covid-19 symptoms then you may wish to contact NHS 111 for further guidance or to arrange a test.

If you are not sure whether they have a cold, flu or Covid-19 then you can use NHS 111 online symptom checker which will help you identify the most likely condition.

<https://111.nhs.uk/covid-19/>

There are a number of other limited circumstances when your child should self-isolate which are as follows:

- If they have had close contact with a confirmed case and are advised to self-isolate by test and trace.
- If they have had close contact with a confirmed case at school either within their class or bubble and, following guidance with Public Health England, the school decides that your child must self-isolate to reduce the risk of cross-transmission.
- If someone else in the household or support bubble has symptoms of Covid-19 or tests positive.
- If they are returning from a country with a high Covid-19 risk and are required to quarantine for 14 days.

In each of these circumstances, your child must self-isolate for 14 days, regardless of whether they test negative for the virus as the incubation period is known to be up to two weeks.

Please keep this letter somewhere safe and refer to it as necessary through the winter term. We appreciate that as parents this is an anxious time but please be assured we are doing everything we can to provide a safe environment for your children. We are committed to providing an outstanding education so if your child must self-isolate for one of the above reasons, and they remain in good health, we will provide them with virtual learning opportunities to ensure they do not miss out on their education.

In all other circumstances, your child should continue to come to school as normal so that we can provide the best possible education for them in a safe and supportive environment. Missing out on their education represents an equal risk to their future. As such, other than for the reasons stated in this letter, we appreciate your efforts to ensure your child's attendance is as positive as possible over the course of this academic year.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'S Beamish', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Simon Beamish
Chief Executive