

PORTISHEAD PRIMARY SCHOOL

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Learning and achieving together

22nd October 2021

Re: Rising COVID rates in the Bath and NE Somerset and North Somerset areas

Dear Parents and Carers,

You will be aware that there has been a very sharp increase in the number of COVID cases in our area and that this has been particularly concentrated in the school population. I thought that you might welcome an update on the current approach in our school and across our Trust.

We continue to work within the Government guidance with increased ventilation, cleaning and good hand hygiene. The DfE's Contingency Framework means that if we need to reintroduce further controls such as bubbles or in an extreme situation remote learning, we need to do that in partnership with the Local Authority's Health Protection Teams.

Within the Trust we also have a clear escalation process for increasing our safety controls (1-4 may be implemented together or in a different order):

1. Reintroducing social distancing between adults and between adults and children.
2. Reducing or cancelling large events, such as assemblies. These can be switched to Teams etc when needed.
3. Considering use of masks for adults or secondary school pupils and increasing the frequency of asymptomatic testing to daily rather than weekly.
4. Reducing the numbers of visitors coming on to the school site.

If the number of cases that we have has reached the escalation thresholds that have been set by the DfE, and after advice from Health Protection Teams in our LA, we may then also consider:

5. Reintroducing a bubble for a particular class or cohort.
6. Reintroducing bubbles across the school.
7. Moving to Remote Learning for a class/cohort with provision for Key Workers' Children and Vulnerable Learners.
8. Moving to Remote Learning for the whole school with provision for Key Workers' Children and Vulnerable Learners.

As a school we have had a small number of cases and have begun to see the impact of children being sent home in other schools. We are extremely grateful for your vigilance and support with isolating when

symptoms appear and ensuring PCR tests are taken. This alongside the hard work of the whole school team ensuring good hand and respiratory hygiene as well as adequate ventilation in school and engagement with asymptomatic testing appears to have prevented a spike in cases.

The autumn half-term should provide a welcome respite and firebreak to reduce the levels of COVID in schools. We will be open to all pupils on 2nd November.

Given the increase in numbers we are introducing the following additional measures to reduce the health risk to children and staff and to do all we can to minimise the risk of remote learning for our pupils.

- Additional school cleaning is being extended to the end of the school year.
- Staff and visitors will wear face coverings in communal areas unless exempt.
- All staff meetings revert to online/remote sessions.
- All assemblies will continue to be delivered remotely via Teams.
- Children in Playstation will play and eat in year groups to reduce the risk of cross year group infections.
- We ask that parents wear face covering on site from Tuesday the 2nd of November until further notice unless exempt. **(This will not be policed by school leaders. We require your cooperation and partnership, regardless of your personal views. By working together, we hope that we will not see a rise in infections after the break and thus prevent classes or year groups having to learn from home!)**

Our measures will be reviewed on an ongoing basis as we move through the winter period and we hope that in time we can remove them as the local risk reduces.

It has been a very challenging term for us in school and I know that parents will join me in expressing thanks to our staff who have shown great resilience and despite the continuing stresses of this time have delivered on the 'ordinary magic' of school life. We value the huge part you have played and wish you a wonderful half term break.

Yours faithfully,

Richard Riordan

Headteacher
Portishead Primary School