

3<sup>rd</sup> January 2022

### **Important communication about the return to school and Covid.**

Dear Parents and Carers

Happy New Year and all my best wishes for 2022. I hope you have had an enjoyable Christmas break!

Further to my letter prior to the holidays, I am writing to update you on further guidance that we have received from the Department of Education and from the Director of Public Health in Doncaster (Dr Rupert Suckling) which outlines some growing concerns about infection rates and how we respond to them locally and at Willow Primary School.

#### **Doncaster Infection Rates**

There has been a significant rise in infection rates within Doncaster.

Dec 2021:

- The current rates within Doncaster are **363.8** per 100,000 (Up to 9<sup>th</sup> December)
- There were no reported cases of Omicron within Doncaster according to the Director of Public Health

Jan 2022:

- The current rates within Doncaster are **903.5** per 100,000 (up to 24<sup>th</sup> December)
- As expected Omicron is now the dominant strain of the virus in Doncaster with over 80% of cases recorded now being this new variant.
- The hospital figures have also started to significantly increase, with the largest number of admissions in a single day since the pandemic began occurring yesterday. There are currently 91 patients receiving active Covid care across the hospitals and 7 in ICU.
- The most recent information about community transmission rates for Willow Primary's catchment shows a rate of **918.2 per 100,000**

Whilst the data suggests that people who have received booster vaccines are showing mild symptoms, I am concerned about the impact that these rates will have on continuity of education for our pupils.

**From Wednesday 5<sup>th</sup> Jan 2022, we will be increasing our safety measures, in a preventative way, in order to try and reduce transmission rates and support our families / communities.** Please can I express my sincere thanks in the supportive manner you have helped our school to implement these changes in these unprecedented times. I am sure you would agree that we are trying to take the best approach to manage these risks whilst still providing a service to our community.

#### **Measures to be implemented at Willow from 5<sup>th</sup> January:**

1. Please could we advise that all **parents wear face-covering when entering school site** due to the numbers of people. Our staff have also been advised to wear face-coverings within communal areas and in close contact situations within the classroom.

2. We will continue to have a soft start from 8.45am so that pupils and parents are not waiting on the playground. This will mean that pupils can go straight into classrooms and avoid crowds congregating. Entry and exit routes and the one way system must continue to be used. The gates will be locked at 8.55am.
3. At the end of the day, please maintain social distance when waiting for your child and avoid crowding the exit gate on the Key Stage 2 playground.
4. In the school, we will work within year groups/ bubbles to limit the spread of the new variant as much as possible because it is highly transmissible.
5. Hand washing routines will continue
6. Playtimes and lunchtimes will continue to be organised with staggered times and seating plans with increased ventilation in indoor spaces
7. After school clubs such as Basketball Club or Mini Chefs, where children mix between year groups, will be reorganised into year groups where possible. This may mean that we cannot offer certain clubs but our childcare provision will continue to 4.30pm for working parents. We will contact parents directly if this affects your child and they will start to mix again when infection rates decrease.
8. Breakfast club and after school provision will continue with social distancing measures.
9. Any trips taking place will be risk assessed against covid

### **Lateral Flow Testing**

Following my letter to you on 15<sup>th</sup> December, **parents are advised to lateral flow test their child or children before attending school on Wednesday 5<sup>th</sup> January.** If pupils are showing any symptoms, then you should apply for a PCR test.. Again, I hope you understand that this is really important in order to reduce the transmission of the virus within the school. We will send any children home for a PCR test if they show symptoms of covid.

### **Self-Isolation Guidance**

Since Wednesday 22 December, the 10-day self-isolation period for people who record a positive PCR test result for COVID-19 has been reduced to 7 days in most circumstances, unless you cannot test for any reason.

Individuals may now take LFD tests on day 6 and day 7 of their self-isolation period. Those who receive two negative test results are no longer required to complete 10 full days of self-isolation. The first test must be taken no earlier than day 6 of the self-isolation period and tests must be taken 24 hours apart. This also applies to children under five, with LFD testing at parental or guardian discretion. **If both these test results are negative, and the person does not have a high temperature, they may end their self-isolation after the second negative test result and return to school from day 8. We will expect to see evidence of both negative lateral flow tests via a photograph emailed to the admin email address.**

### **In the event of closure of classes, year groups or the school**

Obviously, closure of any form will be the last resort and this is what we are trying to avoid by implementing the above procedures. If we do have to take the decision to close, this will be based on factors such as no staff to deliver face to face teaching and where infection rates are escalating so much that we need to take break the cycle.

In the event of the above circumstances arising, I will communicate with parents immediately explaining the circumstances for this. This will allow you to make alternative arrangements. We will then move to remote learning to deliver lessons for the pupils via Teams for Years 1 to 6 or Tapestry for children in Reception.

### **Vaccination and Booster Jobs**

As stated in all the national guidance, the way out of this pandemic is for all communities to be vaccinated. We are urging all our parents and families to ensure that they have booked in for these. We will continue to provide information on where these are available via our social media.

Finally, I will continue to update our parents and carers, over the coming weeks of any further information. It is essential that we approach this in a calm, measured and conscientious way as this has served us well over the past two years.

I want to reassure all parents and carers again, that the education and safety of our pupils and staff are paramount in our planning, as well as the need to provide continuity in our provision.

Thank you so much and take care!

Yours Sincerely,

Mrs Sumner  
Headteacher.