



Mill Water School

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18th December 2020

Dear Parents and Carers,

You may have heard on the news that schools have been asked to “support public health efforts during the return to school in January 2021. This will help deliver the national priority of keeping as many pupils and teachers as possible in school beyond the start of term, minimising the spread of the virus and disruption caused by coronavirus (COVID-19) cases arising in education settings.”

In Devon this term there have been hundreds of pupils out of schools on any given day so we are pleased with our management at Mill Water and want to remain a school with very few cases. Thank you for your continued support in our fight to keep the number low.

As always, there is no guidance yet for SEND provision so I will be keeping you up to date via the website and letters over the holidays. I have a meeting on Tuesday with the strategic leads from Public Health England and DCC and as soon as I know more information I will share it with you.

My intention, as it has been all along, is to have as many pupils in school from the start of term and safeguarding the school community remains the most important job of all. This means I will be taking my steer from the DfE and PHE, but also advocating for my pupils and families who, as we know, have been marginalised during all decision making by the DfE.

The DfE states “All specialist settings and alternative provision schools or settings should plan for full-time on-site provision for all pupils from the start of term. Those with secondary-age children are encouraged to take up the offer to test their pupils.”

“Schools delivering this programme will enable as many staff and pupils as possible to get tested from the first week of term, the week commencing 4 January. This will be done with lateral flow device tests. If the pupil’s first test is positive, they should immediately self-isolate and have this positive test confirmed with a standard Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR) test (they take more time because they are usually processed in a laboratory). If the pupil’s first test is negative, they should be tested again 3 days later. If this test is positive, they should self-isolate and confirm this with a PCR test.”

Whilst I am fully supportive of the need to test staff and keep our community safe, I will not be administering tests to your children until every detail has been investigated. The fact that the DfE state “tests can be administered by agency staff and volunteers”, shows a complete lack of understanding of our pupils and their needs.

It is not yet clear if we will be required to test all our pupils, but if we are we will be given an extra day for logistics on Tuesday 5th January 2021. If we need that day I will inform you as soon as I can via the website.

Please see the link below to read the full DfE guidance

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/schools-and-childcare-settings-return-in-january-2021/schools-and-childcare-settings-return-in-january-2021>

Please read – **Important information about tracking COVID cases over the Christmas holiday**

Thank you all for your support this term by letting us know when your child has been isolating or has tested positive for Coronavirus. We are pleased and relieved that no one has been seriously affected. We want to keep it that way, so we are asking for your help over the Christmas holiday. The Government have requested that we track any cases that happen in the Christmas holiday so that we can alert people who may have been in contact with them. This is called contact tracing. We are hoping that no pupils or staff become ill with COVID symptoms during the holiday period, but if they do and they test positive, we will need to inform anyone who was in contact with them 48 hours prior to them becoming symptomatic.

If your child develops symptoms more than 48 hours after last being in school, then you will not need to contact us. If your child develops symptoms within 48 hours of last being in school and then tests positive for COVID-19 during the first week of the Christmas holiday you must contact us following the instructions below so that we can alert those people who they came into contact with.

We have set up an email address for you to do this. As soon as you receive a positive test result you should email us at covid19@millwater.devon.sch.uk

This email address will be checked every day until 24th December. Please do not use any other school email addresses as there is no guarantee that they will be monitored. The school is closed during the holidays and so there will be no phone service. If you need to contact us about a positive test, please give us: • Your name • Your child's name • The date they first showed symptoms • The date they received a positive test result • A phone number in case we need to contact you.

We know how important the Christmas holidays are and how much you will be looking forward to seeing your families. The ideal will be that nobody will become unwell, but if they do it's really important that everyone follows these guidelines and we do our best to keep others as safe as possible.

May I take this opportunity to wish you all a peaceful and healthy Christmas and I look forward to welcoming you back in 2021.

Yours sincerely



S A Pickering

Head Teacher

Mill Water School