



Mill Water School

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Dear Parents and Carers

Staff have continued to be busy this week working with children in school, supporting children who are working at home, delivering learning packs to families and taking children out in the community. The weather has been a bit kinder and we have seen children making progress wherever their learning is happening. Literacy interventions have been taking place and I have seen lots of evidence of hard work in every class and lots of pupils doing their best at home. Well done.

We have had another week where our focus has been on Covid-19, testing and vaccinations, and I am very happy to report that we have been able to secure a substantial number of appointments for class based staff to get vaccinations over three days next week (6th, 7th and 8th February). The 8th February is a Monday and this might mean some arrangements for children having to be changed, but your teacher will let you know if you are affected. The availability of these appointments is really good news for us because it gives us confidence that the majority of our class based staff, along with staff in other key roles, will be protected from serious illness by the end of February.

The roll out of the coronavirus (COVID-19) vaccination is excellent news, says Devon's Director of Public Health, but caution is still needed, he warns.

Steve Brown said:

"I've heard various heart-warming stories of gratitude from people in the first priority groups who have recently had their initial coronavirus vaccination - descriptions of the relief they feel, and the promise of getting back to a normal life.

"It is indeed excellent news, but we need to remember that the vaccination is just part of the solution, rather than the cure itself.

"The vaccination protects those who have had it from becoming seriously ill with coronavirus. However, there is no evidence yet to suggest that the vaccination stops a person from actually catching the virus, nor therefore prevents them from transmitting the virus to others.

"Even when you have had the vaccination, you still need to follow the public health measures and continue to take steps to minimise the risk of spreading the virus.

"That means, keep up with social distancing, wearing of face coverings when in public spaces, and washing your hands properly and regularly.

"Please continue to stay at home and avoid unnecessary journeys out of the house.

"Remember if you are identified as a close contact of a person who has tested positive you will still need to self-isolate for 10 days, even if you have had the vaccine.

The full article can be read here:

<https://content.govdelivery.com/accounts/UKDEVONCC/bulletins/2bd7e16>

The debate around the safety of schools continues to rumble on and you may have seen the Downing Street briefing on Wednesday when it was asked how it was possible for schools to be both “safe” for pupils and a “vector” for coronavirus.

Prof Van-Tam replied that there is not a "markedly increased rate of infection or mortality" from Covid-19 among teachers. He said teachers do get ill, but it is not clear if they catch Covid from schools or elsewhere in their lives.

He told the No10 briefing: “Do children get Covid-19?” Yes.

“Do children get ill with Covid-19?” Very rarely indeed.

“Do children transmit Covid-19?” Yes, but it is predominantly a signal towards the upper teenage years - in other words, the more adult-like they become, the greater propensity for them to transmit to others.

"Do teachers get Covid-19?" Yes.

"Is it clear that teachers get Covid-19 from children or from each other?" No, it is not clear. They could also pick it up in their own lives outside of school.

"Is there a clear signal in the data of a markedly increased rate of infection or mortality in teachers?" No.

“But could infected children introduce the infection back in their own households and therefore contribute to R?” Absolutely yes.

Boris Johnson also said in the same briefing that schools would begin opening more widely from 8th March *at the very earliest*. We are confident that, with our lateral flow testing programme for staff in place and a good proportion of our staff getting vaccinated, we will be ready to open to all children whenever schools are re-opened after 8th March.

Covid-19 - Please continue to use the covid19@millwater.devon.sch.uk email address to inform us of any updates or results of tests. This inbox is monitored throughout the day and also over weekends.

FSM vouchers are now being emailed out to all eligible families. Arrangements will be slightly different over half term, but will resume normally after half term until children are back in school full time.

Vaccinations - To help prioritise your family to receive a Covid-19 vaccination, we have been informed you should speak to your GP and ensure your patient records state you are a parent/carer of a child with additional needs, especially if your child is classed as extremely clinically vulnerable. You may be eligible to be included in ‘Phase One’, alongside NHS/paid carers when it comes to prioritising receiving the vaccine.

Wishing you a restful and safe weekend.

Yours sincerely



S A Pickering
Headteacher