



Mill Water School

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Bicton, East Budleigh, Devon, EX9 7BJ | Headteacher: Sarah Pickering

4th January 2021

Dear Parents and Carers

I hope you've enjoyed Christmas and the new year with your families. Wishing you a happy and hopefully much brighter 2021.

You will be aware that the situation regarding COVID is complex and ever-changing. We were pleased that no further positive cases were reported in the first week of the holiday and therefore we did not need to ask any pupils or staff to self-isolate.

We have been incredibly lucky in that our precautionary measures meant we only had one period of isolation for a bubble last term. This is in stark contrast to other local schools so thank you to all of you for supporting us in our attempt to keep school open fully.

However, the situation nationwide is concerning, particularly with the new COVID variant seemingly spreading at a greater rate. Devon has moved into Tier 3 and so although restrictions here are not as severe as in other areas of the country, we have seen a change.

At present we are opening tomorrow Tuesday 5th for all our pupils. However, teaching unions are calling on the government to close schools in order to slow the spread of the virus and are advising their members not to attend schools if they are fully open. This may have an impact on the number of staff we have available to work and therefore how widely we can open the school. I'm hoping that the picture will become clearer as the week goes on and I will provide a further update then. Options that need to be considered include: opening for the most vulnerable and key worker children or rotas across the school and key worker children. These measures will be taken as a last resort and only if staffing numbers necessitate it.

I wrote to some families before Christmas about attendance, but this has already changed in terms of expectation. I can now authorise a leave of absence for **this week** if you have any concerns about sending your child in whilst I clarify our position. Please feel free to talk to me about your individual circumstances as I will manage every case in terms of what is best for your family.

Over the holiday I have been following updates about mass testing of Secondary pupils and staff in schools. We have only just received special school information so I will be working on this with my leadership team this week and will again update you when more information is available.

To be able to carry out mass testing effectively we need a team of people who are trained. If any of you are able to volunteer to support us with this please let us know, especially if you have medical or care experience.

I will update you as soon as we have further information but I reiterate I will not be mass testing pupils this week.

Best wishes

S A Pickering