

5 November 2020

Dear Parents

As we enter a new period of national lockdown, I thought it would be useful to write to all parents to clarify our response to the most recent government guidance and to request your support in our efforts to keep all members of our community safe in these challenging times.

We are pleased that the government have taken the decision to keep schools open, as we recognise the importance of education to children's development and their mental and physical well-being. We are really keen that as many children as possible are in school each day and, with that in mind, we thought it would be helpful to share the government guidance detailed below in italics.

Being at school is vital for children's education and for their wellbeing. Time spent out of school is detrimental for children's cognitive and academic development, particularly for disadvantaged children. This impact can affect both current levels of education, and children's future ability to learn. It continues to be our aim that all pupils, in all year groups, remain in school full-time.

The risk to children themselves of becoming severely ill from coronavirus (COVID-19) is very low and there are negative health impacts of being out of school. For the vast majority of children, the benefits of being back in the classroom far outweigh the low risk from coronavirus (COVID-19) and schools are taking action to reduce risks still further.

Most children originally identified as clinically extremely vulnerable no longer need to follow original shielding advice. Parents should speak to their child's GP or specialist clinician if they have not already done so, to understand whether their child should still be classed as clinically extremely vulnerable. Those children whose doctors have confirmed they are still clinically extremely vulnerable are advised not to attend school. Children who live with someone who is clinically extremely vulnerable, but who are not clinically extremely vulnerable themselves, should still attend school.

Parents of clinically extremely vulnerable children should be receiving a letter shortly confirming this advice

Department of Education guidance also places a clear responsibility on schools to take swift action when they become aware of a confirmed case of coronavirus (COVID-19) in their setting. With this in mind, **we are appealing to all parents to notify us as soon as possible if their child receives a positive Covid test**, this will enable us to work closely and swiftly with Public Health England, to minimise the risk of further infection.

In line with the guidance published yesterday, we are restricting all visits and visitors to school, other than those that are absolutely necessary. We will be suspending all visits to school for activities such as new admissions and organised performances and we are also suspending all lettings during the period of lockdown. All visitors entering the school buildings will be required to wear face coverings during the period of national lockdown, while inside the school buildings.

Finally, we would like to appeal to all parents to exercise extreme care and diligence, especially during school drop-off and pick-up times. It is vitally important that all parents maintain social distancing at these times and avoid all close personal contact. Many parents are choosing to wear face coverings for these periods, which is great, but please be aware that the wearing of face coverings does not mean social distancing no longer applies.

As always, we are grateful for your support and cooperation in these challenging times.

Kind regards

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "G. Chown".

Gary Chown
Chief Executive
Ventrus Multi Academy Trust