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'For Learning That Lasts A Lifetime'

16th November 2020

Dear Parent/Carers,

Covid-19 Update Letter

Thank you for your continued support this year.

You may be aware of schools locally with confirmed cases of Covid-19 or who are incredibly short-staffed due to isolating and/or shielding staff. These situations have led to closed bubbles and, in some cases, closed schools.

I thought it would be helpful to write to you all with an update of how things are at St Margaret's and with an outline of decisions that may need to be taken.

Isolating staff – due principally to symptoms a staff member or a member of their household has – have led to staff shortages on a number of occasions. Initially staff experienced difficulties in getting Covid tests and results quickly (as I know many parents did also); the situation is quicker now however still leads to staff being absent from school for typically at least two or three days.

Since the current lockdown started we have two members of staff who have to shield and work from home.

In addition, of course, staff continue to be subject to unplanned absences caused by non-Covid related illness.

Secure Bubbles

As you know we have organised the school into bubbles of children and adults. Almost all staff work in only one bubble - this is in order to reduce any spread of infection and to reduce the number of people who would have to isolate were we to have a confirmed case of Covid. Keeping staff organised in this way reduces the options we have for covering absent staff which makes keeping all bubbles open even harder.

To date we have been able to keep all bubbles open and operational as we have had at least the bare minimum of staff for that bubble at work. If we were to come to a point where we are unable to staff a bubble then the bubble would have to close; that would mean that the children in that bubble would not be able to attend school and would be required to complete the school work as published on the school website.



What to expect with a confirmed case of Covid-19

When a school has a confirmed case of Covid-19 in a pupil or a member of staff advice is sought from the Department for Education and/or Public Health England. PHE will decide, with the school leaders, who the confirmed case has had contact with. This typically then leads to those contacts being required to isolate at home; for us this is likely to be the relevant bubble of staff and children. Remote learning will be accessed from the school website and, assuming the class teacher is not unwell, the teacher should be contacted by the families by email throughout the isolation period. If the teacher is unwell families will be advised who they should contact.

Communication

Parent/carers have been good at keeping the school well informed if their child, or someone in their child's household, has symptoms of Covid. They have also kept us up to date regarding getting a Covid test and the results of these. This level of communication is crucial in us having a clear picture of what is going on and being able to act quickly if we have a confirmed case.

Please note that, if you receive your child's positive test result after school has closed, in the evening, at the weekend or in a school holiday, please email secretary@st-margarets-dover.kent.sch.uk – this is the account which is being monitored outside of school hours. Letting us know as soon as possible is really important so that the school can seek the necessary guidance and inform families accordingly.

Parentmail and Text Message

If there is a confirmed case of Covid-19 within your child's bubble which requires action for you we will inform you using Parentmail and text message. We will also write to the rest of the school community so that you are all aware of the situation.

Learning at Home

Curriculum planning is posted onto the school website each week on a Monday morning – typically by 10.30am – on the relevant class pages.

The planning mirrors what is going on at school so is relevant for children in the classroom as well as individuals who may be isolating at home.

The teachers have given the planning a great deal of thought and have made use of available online links and videos where appropriate. Usually the teacher will make reference in the planning to where a change is needed if the learning is being undertaken at home, rather than at school, and what is planned is not possible at home. Occasionally there is an oversight and you won't have at home what the children are using at school; please bear with the staff if this happens and do what you are able to complete on the plan. Completed learning should be emailed to the class teacher every day – a photograph or an attached document will suffice. Work set does not need to be printed.



Action points for parent/carers:-

1. Ensure your family are living according to Government guidelines – currently as per the National Lockdown restrictions.
2. Keep your child at home if they, or anyone in their household, has what could be a symptom of Covid-19.
3. Keep the school well informed about symptoms and test outcomes.
4. Maintain strict social distance from other families, this includes at pick-up and drop-off. Only one adult per family should come on site in order to minimise contact. Do not bring older children onto the school site.
5. Use the 'out of hours' contact email of secretary@st-margarets-dover.kent.sch.uk if you receive a positive test result when the school is closed. When school is open please telephone the school office.
6. Check your email and texts regularly so that you are up to date with information from school.
7. Access home learning for your child when they are isolating from the relevant class page of the school website. Email completed work to the class teacher on a daily basis.

As always please don't hesitate to make contact via telephone or email if you have any queries, concerns or comments.

Yours sincerely



Ms H Comfort
Executive Headteacher

