

2nd November 2020

Dear Parent and Carer

I hope that your child enjoyed a good rest at half term and that you were able to enjoy some of this time with them.

As you are no doubt aware, the Prime Minister made an announcement on Saturday that much greater restrictions are going to come into effect for the whole of the country from Thursday 5th November in the form of a second national 'lockdown'. I would like to offer my very best wishes to those of you who are going to be most affected by the new restrictions. Let us all hope that the infection rate is significantly decreased by these new measures. It is very important that the children understand how the new measures will affect them in the evenings and weekends.

With regards to school I would like to make the following points:

Face Coverings

As we are currently in 'Tier One' the wearing of a face covering has not been mandatory in school. However, we are waiting for guidance from the Department for Education (DfE) as to whether the new rules from Thursday 5th November will change this. It seems likely that the wearing of a face covering in indoor areas of greater congestion e.g. moving between lessons in the corridors, will become mandatory. As soon as we receive clarification we will let you know, but if your child does not already have a suitable face covering, it would be sensible to ensure they are prepared. Students who are exempt for medical reasons would not have to wear one. We do have some staff in this position as well.

After School Clubs

There have been some reports in the media that after schools clubs will not be permitted from Thursday 5th November. Again, this is not official guidance that has come from the DfE and we will watch this situation closely and update you as necessary. We very much hope that even our more limited programme of clubs taking place within year group bubbles can continue, but we will have to wait and see. In the meantime, the after school extra-curricular and intervention programmes will run as normal.

Track and Trace

We were extremely fortunate that we had no positive cases during the course of last half term. However, over the half term holiday itself we have learned of a small number of positive cases and we have been in contact with parents and the relevant authorities including the DfE and Public Health Dorset. Understandably, we have had some concerns raised from parents about whether or not their child should be coming to school today if they believe that another student may be affected and it is not uncommon in any school community for a rumour mill to develop. I want to stress that we have to follow very strict guidelines and if a positive case means that we need to inform parents that their child has been in what is felt to be 'close proximity' to the student who received a positive test, then we absolutely will do so.

These decisions are not taken in isolation and we follow the instructions of healthcare professionals. By the same token, we are not permitted to share this information if it has not been deemed appropriate to do so. Of course, anonymity for the affected student and their family must always be guaranteed. If you have any queries about a potential case that is worrying, please contact Justin Abbott (Medical/Health & Safety Officer) jabbott@budmouth-aspirations.org and he will be happy to speak with you. Can I please request that students and parents refrain from using social media to speculate and comment on potential cases, as this can be unhelpful and cause inaccurate information to be spread. It is also very upsetting for the family affected. Thank you for your support with this matter.

.../

Attendance

Please note that attendance at school remains compulsory. In the case of an issue linked to Covid-19, the occasions when a student **must not** come to school are as follows:

1. They have received a positive test.
2. They are self-isolating as either they, or a member of the household they live in, has symptoms of Covid-19. Students must not come to school and must self-isolate if any member of their household is symptomatic.
3. They have been contacted by 'Track and Trace' as having been in close proximity to an affected person. They must stay in self-isolation for the time period specified by the Track and Trace Officer.
4. You have been contacted by Budmouth Academy to inform you that due to a positive case of a student who has been in close proximity to your child, that they need to remain at home and self-isolate for the specified timeframe.

In the case of one of the above affecting your child, please ensure that you do the following:

- Contact Aileen Sheppard (Attendance Officer) by email: attendance@budmouth-aspirations.org giving the reason for absence.
- Please copy Justin Abbott into the same email. This has proved very helpful in making sure that advice and guidance can also be given to parents and the family.

I would also like to remind you that it is preferred that all absences should be reported via email: attendance@budmouth-aspirations.org. If you would like a call back from a member of staff to discuss your child's absence, please indicate this in your email.

Concerns about a family member

We understand that there are some circumstances where families are extremely concerned about sending their child to school due to a fear of them potentially bringing the virus home. I can only say that whilst they are at school we are doing all that we can to mitigate the risks. Regardless of the family circumstances, it does remain the case that attendance at school is compulsory. Students who have to remain at home for one of the four reasons above are coded as 'X'. This is a new national attendance code meaning their attendance record is not affected.

In any other cases of non-attendance, schools have been advised that it has to be coded as unauthorised. Again, if you would like to talk with Justin Abbott regarding a family case, you are more than welcome to do so. In some cases parents who have done this have found it to be very helpful. We know that the guidance is not always easy to understand or interpret and sometimes it is nice to just talk it through with someone.

Thank you for your continued support. I will be in touch again this week when we have received clarification on aspects of the guidance.

Yours sincerely



David Herbert