



The Castle School

A SPECIALIST COLLEGE FOR COMMUNICATION & INTERACTION

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Headteacher **Jon Hewitt**

Deputy **Caroline Whitlock**

24th September 2020

Dear Parents/Carers,

I just thought I would write to you now that we have been back in school for a few weeks.

Firstly, I would like to say a huge thank you to you for being so supportive of what we are doing. These are challenging times for all of us and it is reassuring to know that we are all working together to keep everyone as safe as possible.

COVID-19 symptoms and what to do

As you will be aware, there are 3 main symptoms to look out for. They are:

- **a high temperature** – this means you feel hot to touch on your chest or back (you do not need to measure your temperature)
- **a new, continuous cough** – this means coughing a lot longer than an hour, or 3 or more coughing episodes in 24 hours (if you usually have a cough, it may be worse than usual)
- **a loss or change to your sense of smell or taste** – this means you've noticed you cannot smell or taste anything, or things smell or taste different to normal

If your child has any one of the above symptoms, even if it goes away, you should do the following:

1. Get a test to check if you have coronavirus as soon as possible.
2. Stay at home and do not have visitors until you get your test result – only leave your home to have a test.

Anyone you live with, and anyone in your support bubble, must also stay at home until you get your result.

You can get a test by going to the NHS website at

<https://www.gov.uk/get-coronavirus-test>

If your child has one of the 3 COVID-19 symptoms please make sure that you contact the school as soon as possible.

If your child has a negative test result, please contact the school to speak to us before sending your child back.

If your child has a positive test result then please call the school immediately so that we can start our processes to ensure that other pupils and staff are kept safe

If your child is self-isolating due to another family member having symptoms, please can you inform us as soon as their test result is received to help us plan for your child's return to school.

Drop-off and pick-up

To increase safety at school we are asking all parents who come to school for drop-off and pick-up to wear masks at all times whilst on site. We have also asked transport drivers and escorts to do the same.

It is also important that everyone avoids queueing before the allotted times. They are 8.45am in the morning and 2.55pm in the afternoon.

Please avoid gathering on site as well. If you have come in a car, please remain in it until it is time to queue. If you are walking, please come onto the site at the allotted times above.

Please, where possible, for one parent or carer only to come to the school door.

We very much appreciate your efforts with this. We know it is inconvenient, but the main consideration here is reducing the chances of any transmission of COVID-19. If we work together on this we will ensure that your child and others pupils and staff are as safe as possible.

Curriculum

As you will be aware, we are currently delivering a recovery curriculum. This has allowed us to help settle pupils back in with a focus on mental health and wellbeing. There has been some amazing recovery work going on in all areas of the school, which is lovely to see. We will continue to use the recovery curriculum to help support all our pupils. We will also now start to move back to more core curriculum activities. This will, of course, be a transition and this will feel different for each class. Rest assured that the class teams have the best interests of your child at heart of every decision they make.

SAP Parents meetings

We would normally have our SAP parent evening in mid-October. However, sadly we will not be able to have this on-site this term. As such, we are looking at ways that class teams

can meet with parents virtually around the same time and details will come out on this over the next couple of weeks.

Possible closures

Unfortunately, many schools up and down the country have had Bubble and whole school closures when they have had confirmed cases of COVID-19. We have been fortunate up until this moment that we had no cases confirmed of staff or pupils in our school. However, there have been several cases around West Berkshire so we need to be prepared.

Each class team has developed work packs and these will be distributed if such a closure takes place. Class teams will also set-up daily sessions via Zoom or Teams to help engage your child whilst they are away from school.

What happens if a pupil or member of staff is confirmed as having COVID-19

The first thing I will do, to reduce the chance of further transmission, will be to close the Bubble. If this is during the school day, parents of children in that Bubble will be called and asked to pick their child up.

Staff and pupils in that Bubble will then need to self-isolate for 14 days or until further advice and guidance is issued (families in the household will not need to self-isolate unless their child showed symptoms).

We will then work closely with the local authority and the Health Protection Teams to carry out a risk assessment. Further guidance will then be given as to what happens next.

I am hopeful that we will not face this situation, but we need to be prepared that eventuality may arise.

What happens if staffing levels are not safe?

Another challenge that is facing all schools at the moment is that of staffing. Schools, especially special schools with a variety of pupils who have complex needs, require a minimum level of staffing to operate safely. We will work very hard to try and ensure that we always have this level of staffing. However, the reality is that if we have a certain number of staff self-isolating or off ill for other reasons we may not be able to operate safely. If this is the case then we may be forced to close classes or Bubbles when required.

I would like to stress that this would be an absolute last resort, but again, I want everyone to be aware so that we are all prepared to any eventuality.

I believe that by working together and supporting each other we can make The Castle School as safe as possible and make sure that we reduce the risk of transmission and, as such, remain open as much as possible.

Thanks so much,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Mark', written in a cursive style.

Jon Hewitt

Headteacher