



The Castle School

A SPECIALIST COLLEGE FOR COMMUNICATION & INTERACTION

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Headteacher **Jon Hewitt**

Deputy **Caroline Whitlock**

22nd October 2021

Dear Parents/Carers

As we head into the half term I wanted to write to you to update you on how we can all help protect the school community as much as possible.

We are currently experiencing a large increase in cases across schools in the West Berkshire area and the local authority wanted me to share with you some information on how you can protect yourself and your family throughout half term and when schools return in November. They are asking you again to take care in the way you meet, mix and share space with friends and family. With the darker evenings and colder temperatures, activities and gatherings will naturally be more indoors where it's easier for winter infections to spread.

They, therefore, ask you to undertake the following over half-term to minimise transmission both over the holiday period and upon return to school:

- If possible, undertake twice-weekly asymptomatic Lateral Flow Device (LFD) testing for all household/family members age 11 and over. This may not be possible for many of our pupils, but those who can should try and carry out the tests. You can order test kits by going to the following weblink.

<https://www.gov.uk/order-coronavirus-rapid-lateral-flow-tests>

- Book a PCR test for you or your child if you are concerned that either of you might have Covid-19 or have had contact with someone with Covid-19. If you don't meet any of the criteria for seeking a PCR test, please tick the box '**I've been told to get a test by my local council, health protection team or healthcare professional.**'
- Any child (primary or secondary age) who has a household member test positive for Covid-19 should take a daily LFD test for seven days (where possible), in addition to taking a one-off PCR test. Although not government guidance, we would also ask that you keep your child away from school if someone in the household tests positive for Covid-19. This is in order to keep our most vulnerable pupils safe.
- Any child (primary or secondary age) who is identified as a close contact of a positive case via NHS Test and Trace are advised to take a daily LFD test for seven days (where possible), in addition to taking a one-off PCR test.

Just to reiterate, that LFD testing is not suitable for all young people and you, as parents, will be able to make the judgement as to whether you can test your child or not.

They also ask you to continue to keep in mind these key elements in the ways to keep safe;

- **Hands** – wash with water and soap or use hand sanitiser regularly.
- **Face** - please try to wear a face covering when in enclosed spaces or large groups of people.
- **Space** – allow as much space and distance between you and others, and try to avoid crowds.
- **Fresh air** - meet friends outdoors or in well-ventilated areas as much as possible will help keep everyone safe

Face coverings

Due to the increase in infections we have asked staff (who are able to do so) to wear face coverings in communal areas and corridors in school. For children over 11 years old I would ask that they wear a face covering if they are able. However, I am acutely aware that this will not be possible for many of our children and therefore this is very much voluntary for pupils.

It is likely that cases will remain high after the half-term break, and the local authority will be working with schools over the coming week to review whether any additional measures will be needed as schools return in November.

I will, of course, let you know as soon as any decisions are made on changes.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jon Hewitt', written in a cursive style.

Jon Hewitt