



Thursday 2nd September 2021

Dear parents,

Following some concerns from parents, I am writing to hopefully offer some reassurance about how the safety of the aspire staff and children remains my absolute priority. The current situation is one of rising covid cases, a vaccination programme and very few government restrictions both in schools and in the wider community. I am very aware that this must be causing some concern so wanted to write and clarify the measures we have put in place, in line with the guidance.

1. Staff testing - all staff will be continuing to use lateral flow testing at home, twice a week, with results reported to me and via the NHS website. Any staff testing positive will isolate and attend a centre for a PCR test. Staff have been advised to test daily if they have close contact with someone who tests positive, as the self isolation guidelines have now changed.
2. The vast majority of staff have been double vaccinated, I have collected information from staff and have advised non vaccinated staff on mask wearing and social distancing. Vaccinations remain the choice of each individual staff member and are not mandatory. The information about who has been vaccinated remains confidential to senior staff within aspire, so that we can manage any self isolation.
3. All classrooms will be ventilated with doors and windows open. The government is issuing carbon dioxide monitors to ensure that we are ventilating rooms adequately. Some parents have asked if they can donate air filtration systems, we would welcome this. Please get in touch with your head of school. Pupils will need to be dressed in appropriate layers as the weather gets colder.
4. Parents will be notified immediately of positive cases within their child's school. Any child who is contacted by track and trace and advised to self isolate will be provided with remote education via google classroom. We will also provide remote education to pupils whose parents choose to self isolate. However as current guidance states that children do not need to isolate themselves, the attendance policy will not authorise absences where it is the parent choice. Parents in the other aspire schools will also be notified of cases within a few days.

5. Pupils and staff will be washing hands at regular intervals throughout the day, and the cleaning schedule will be maintained that has been established over the last 18 months, to try and prevent infection.
6. We are unable to continue with the staggered drop offs and pick ups as it impacts on learning time and we no longer have the permission from the DFE to maintain this. We are however using a 15 minute drop off window and staff will be reminding parents to social distance.
7. Staff are no longer required to wear masks in school in communal and shared areas, much like it is now a choice as to whether you wear them in shops etc. Masks were never worn in classrooms due to DFE guidance on communication with children. Non vaccinated staff have been advised regarding social distancing and the wearing of face coverings.
8. In the case of multiple infections within one school, we would follow the out break contingency plans, which sets out the measures which would be put back in place. These measures include the reinstatement of bubbles and wearing of face masks, as well as staggered drops etc. I will of course inform you if this becomes necessary as it is likely that it would change with immediate effect.

I am hoping that the above letter provides some reassurance, in the light of the government facts and figures. I am aware that the range of views amongst parents is vast with some wanting normal school life to resume and others remaining very anxious. I am governed by the the DFE policies and guidance but also have a duty of care to the aspire community, and remain steadfast in my aim to keep staff and pupils safe to the best of my ability.

Please do contact me at exechead@aspire-kent.org.uk if you have any queries.

Thank you for your support.

Kind regards,

Emma Hickling
Executive Headteacher
Aspire Federation