4th September 2020

Dear Parents and Carers,

This must indeed be a daunting time for you and your daughter as you prepare to send her back to school - for many it will be their first time since schools went into lockdown on March 20th. I am sure, also, that your child is also very excited about seeing her friends –and teachers-once more. We are very much looking forward to seeing our green uniforms back on site and cannot wait to greet the girls. For many of our new students, this will be their first visit since the open evening last October.

Our staff have been working hard in school preparing for a safer environment in which to resume our core purpose of live teaching and ensuring that all our students flourish and grow back in our WSfG community. We are confident that we have put in place all the stringent measures possible for secondary schools-and more besides to ensure everyone’s safety.

We have had to adapt to all the necessary changes to make the school safe, including preparing for a ‘hybrid’ model of learning in the event of a local lockdown in our area so lessons can still take place remotely if a child or year group has to isolate at home. For students in Years 8 and 9 we have had this forced upon us as the installation of the new classrooms has been delayed. We have been told that this is likely to be for three weeks.

**Context**

This local information has been shared with us this week by the Director or Public Health for Waltham Forest, and his team. In Waltham Forest, as of 24-30 August, the 7-day number of new COVID-19 cases (12.3 per 100,000) is lower than the national average (12.7 per 100,00). 34 new cases were reported in the borough during this period. This is around the London average. At the height of the pandemic, 4,796 cases were identified in England on April 22nd. On August 1st, the figure was 491. Between March 5th and August 18th, only 0.1% of children in Waltham Forest have tested positive for the virus and most children who catch the virus have mild symptoms or none. The two main findings from a study into cases and outbreaks in educational settings are:

1 **Infections and outbreaks were more likely to involve staff members**.

2 **There is a strong association between COVID 19 outbreaks in school and community transition**- so it is more important to control infection in our local community to avoid the virus being brought into schools.

Parents and carers have a responsibility to help prevent the spread of coronavirus, for example by:

* Helping children and young people to carry out frequent and thorough handwashing at home
* Ensuring social distancing at the school gates
* Walking, cycling or scootering to school and, if possible, avoid public transport.

**Face masks**

School leaders have been given the autonomy by the government to make local decisions regarding facial coverings. We therefore decided that, in order to allay all anxiety, and in line with many schools on the continent, we are asking all children and adults on site to wear a mask in communal areas. This will not be the case in classrooms where controls have been put in place to minimise risk i.e. the teacher will be at least 2m away from the students, desks will be forward facing, no facing each other, no sharing of materials, restrictions on activities such as wind instruments and group singing in enclosed spaces etc. Students who are exempt from wearing face masks must let the school know by completing this [form](https://forms.office.com/Pages/DesignPage.aspx#FormId=B_HLllWrskmw7Ov9Af8xPDz80q7IkhZMgJ-72fEjTWpUQUdCOE1TQlQ2WFMzWUdUR1BYVDdTTkhXNi4u&Token=3aa029e9f8c847498e5a1823dd6c5111) or contacting the school office.

Attached to this letter is information about correct mask usage, and guidance about how to make reusable ones. Please share this with your child before she returns to school next week.

**General health**

If you have any concerns about your child’s general health, or the health of your immediate family members, please contact your own GP. We are not medical professionals and unless your daughter has been advised by your GP to remain at home, or either she or a member of your family has COVID –19 symptoms leading to the family needing to self-isolate, then she should attend school as normal. If your child is being kept off school due to either a COVID related or other illness, you must follow the usual protocols and inform the school asap on the morning of absence, and before 9am, with full details of the illness. If any member of your immediate family member has a positive diagnosis of COVID-19, then please inform the school IMMEDIATELY.

Thank you,

Yours faithfully



Meryl Davies

Headteacher