



The Consortium Trust

Where together excellence and pupils thrive

4th January 2022

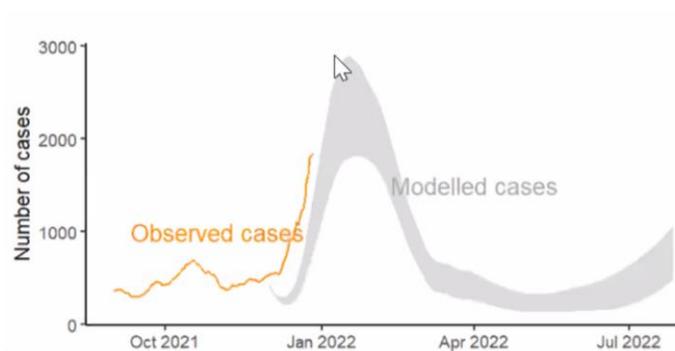
Dear all

Open letter to all staff, governance and parents

First of all, may I take this opportunity to wish everyone a very Happy New Year and I hope that you were all able to enjoy the festivities over the past few weeks. Although I appreciate for some, the holiday has been disrupted by the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic, regrettably I see that this disruption is only likely to continue.

On Monday I attended a meeting of education leaders and public health officials to receive a briefing on the latest figures, although further impact is anticipated we are in a much better position than this time last year. If you recall the Government required schools to open, to then forced us to close the very next day! Schools will reopen tomorrow and there is a collective recognition and commitment that for children's health, well-being and education that we should maintain open schools wherever and whenever possible.

You will have seen much in the media over the past few weeks about the rising cases in the country, locally infection rates are lower than the national picture and fortunately the Omicron variant doesn't appear to be causing significant illness. The graph below shows the modelled (expected) growth rate in cases, with the observed (reported) cases in orange. As can be seen in the graph, the growth in cases is running slightly ahead of time, but is tracking the expected increase. There is also encouraging signs that the observed cases may be peaking at the lower end of the modelled rate.



(Data provided by Public Health, Jan 22)

So what does this mean? It appears that the next two weeks will be challenging, but with a focused effort and a bit of luck we should see things quickly improving throughout the term. The health and safety of our whole school community is fundamental and we will be working hard to ensure that all appropriate measures are taken to ensure that. This will need to be balanced with the requirement to keep face to face education effective. All schools and settings have reviewed their Covid-19 outbreak management plans and risk assessments and individual settings will advise of any site specific arrangements. **As a Trust we will be following the national Department for Education guidance**, where County Councils have issued additional recommendations but conflict with national guidance we will defer to the national guidance. Although, I must stress that the Academy Head or setting leader has the authority to take decisions that reflect local circumstances. This may include merging of classes, moving staff between classes/sites, closing classes/year groups – all of these decisions will be in consultation and with central Trust support.

Registered in England and Wales, Private Limited Company by guarantee, without share capital. Company number: 10255142.

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The following provides an outline of current expectations and guidance, and are subject to change to reflect the ongoing pandemic and guidance issued by government agencies:

- In collaboration with parents we will maximise school attendance for all pupils, in line with the mandatory regulations.
- Restricted access remains in place at all settings, parents unfortunately are not permitted inside our buildings.
- Regular handwashing, enhanced cleaning etc. will be in place.
- All staff, contractors and essential visitors should wear face coverings, staff are not required to wear face coverings while teaching or supporting children.
- All parents, family members etc. that drop off and collect at school/nursery must maintain social distancing and wear a face covering while on school grounds.
- Primary age pupils are not required to wear face coverings.
- All staff are strongly recommended to be fully vaccinated.
- All staff are strongly recommended to take a lateral flow test, at least three times a week, staff that test positive or display symptoms must follow the necessary actions.
- Children between 5 and 10 are not required to lateral flow test (as in secondary age pupils), but where parents are carrying out tests, they must follow the necessary actions if a positive test is returned or the child has symptoms.
- To keep everyone safe school leaders have the right to send children home or refuse entry to school, if the child is unwell and displaying symptoms (in line with public health guidance).
- Where children are isolating through a positive covid-19 result, class or school closure the school will provide quality remote education from day-1.
- Where children are isolating through a positive covid-19 result, class or school closure the school will provide a free-school-meal service for eligible pupils from day-1.
- In line with government 'work at home guidance' the central office remains closed and will be reviewed weekly.

The aim of the Trust is to balance the requirements of public safety and keeping our settings open for all our children. Currently there are no restrictions on educational visits, sports, swimming, assemblies, singing, extended school provision or pupils mixing. Local leaders will use local risk assessments to determine what is best at their setting, effective communication is key. I have included a link to Education Secretary's letter to education leaders for some context [here](#)

To conclude, I would like to thank every member of staff for their continued work during challenging times, pay tribute to all of our children for their resilience and assure every parent of our collective best interests. I appreciate that you entrust us to educate and care for your children, the whole team are focussed on doing the very best that we can. Thank you for your patience and continued support.

Yours faithfully

Andrew Aalders-Dunthorne
CEO & Principal

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