

2<sup>nd</sup> November 2020



**Saffron Walden  
County High School**

Saffron Academy Trust

To Parents & Carers,  
Years 7 to 13  
SWCHS

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By email

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Headteacher: Ms Caroline Derbyshire  
MA (Cantab)

Dear Parents & Carers,

As we approach another national lockdown, we would like to provide you with an update on the situation at SWCHS and we hope this letter will answer any questions that you might have.

In the 7 school weeks of last half term, there were 5 cases affecting our school community, the final one coming to our attention during the half term holiday. Four of the individuals were students (one from each of Years 8, 11, 12 and 13) and one was a member of staff. Two of these positive cases were in asymptomatic individuals, which is one of the challenges we face in responding to this virus. A number of these cases have been linked to car journeys and so where car journeys can be avoided and journeys can be made on foot, we would strongly encourage you to do so. Under current guidance, you should not mix households in a vehicle.

We were very proud of our students who were asked to self-isolate as, in nearly all cases, they continued to work well and showed considerable resilience. A number of students also had to be asked to self-isolate for the half term period. We know that this will have been very disappointing for them and they have our thanks for making that sacrifice to keep others safe. We would also like to say thank you to our SWCHS parents who have been incredibly supportive of the school – it really does make a difference to the staff team.

The community here in Saffron Walden and the surrounding villages has worked very hard to reduce the levels of Covid-19 and the number of positive cases was declining in the week before half term. If we all continue to work together to reduce our contacts outside of school, in line with the new lockdown guidance, it will help schools to remain open and safer for all.

### **How are we working to keep the SWCHS community safer?**

As you know, we have a number of measures in place to help control the spread of this virus in school. The most important of these are:

- a) The use of hand sanitiser every lesson, before and after eating, and on putting on/taking off masks.
- b) The staggering of break and lunch times so that each bubble can be in a designated zone.
- c) The maintenance of ventilation in rooms (even if that makes it colder than usual in classrooms).
- d) Additional cleaning, especially of high frequency touch points such as fire-doors.
- e) The wearing of masks in indoor spaces where students from different bubbles might pass each other.

- f) The use of seating plans so that we can quickly and accurately identify those who might need to self-isolate for the protection of others.
- g) The avoidance of crowding of entry and exit points at the start and end of the day by having staggered timings.

However, most important of all is the vigilance of our parents at home to ensure that those with symptoms do not come into school but instead stay at home and are tested, and the school being informed of the result. Thank you so much for doing this so rigorously.

### **Would it be safer to keep my child at home?**

Schools have contributed to the increase in Covid-19 cases nationally as they increase the number of contacts for those individuals attending them. However, Covid-19 remains a very low risk to the health of students of secondary school age. The risks that result from missing out on face-to-face education to the well-being and opportunities of our young people in the longer term are very high. We believe, like the government, that the education we provide is best done in the classroom and that students need to continue to attend school as the benefits of being in school are so significant. We would urge all parents to ensure all students always attend school when not self-isolating or ill. The other lockdown measures can work to bring the R rate below 1, whilst keeping our schools open.

If you are a family that was shielding in the summer, you might wish to consider additional safety measures, such as asking your child to wear a mask in lessons, and washing hands and changing clothes immediately on returning home. You may also wish to seek additional guidance from your GP.

### **Will learning be disrupted during this lockdown period?**

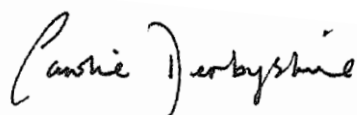
We will make every effort to ensure learning at school can continue for all students not needing to self-isolate. However, staffing levels are also affected by Covid-19 as staff may also need to self-isolate for periods of time. Last half term, cover lessons in school were running at about double the usual level, putting additional pressure on the remaining staff in school. If staffing levels fall below a critical point (which came close to being the case in the week beginning October 19<sup>th</sup>), then we might need to send a year group home to ensure all lessons in school have a teacher and that the school can operate safely. Should this be the case, we would look to minimise the impact on any particular year group and we would provide immediate remote learning on TEAMS for those affected. To reduce the risk of this being the case, we are working to increase our capacity to cover lessons.

### **What is school doing to support the well-being of students?**

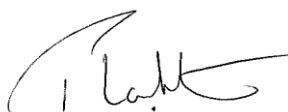
We have a number of interventions in place for those who need them. For example, we have opened a new Pastoral Hub and will soon be opening some additional counselling spaces. The routine and structure of school is also important for many students and, when we walk around the school, we see students working hard and enjoying being back in the classroom. We are also aware that students need some fun things to look forward to. As well as working on ways to support the elderly members of our community, our wonderful 6<sup>th</sup> Form students are organising a fantastic Covid-secure Charities' Week for the school. We will have our usual joyful end of term events, just delivered in a rather different way.

Thank you again for your on-going support for County High.

Yours sincerely,



**Caroline Derbyshire**  
Executive Headteacher, SWCHS



**Polly Lankester**  
Headteacher, SWCHS

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