



The Consortium Trust

Where together excellence and pupils thrive

23rd September 2020

Dear Parents and Carers,

Covid-19 briefing

We continue to live through challenging times and with the Government's announcement yesterday in relation to further tighter controls on our daily lives in an attempt to get the virus under control. I am sure that there are questions and concerns regarding the operation of our schools. I am also acutely aware that there is so much information circulating I will try to keep my letter brief. Here is a link to the government's new restrictions:

https://www.gov.uk/government/news/coronavirus-covid-19-what-has-changed-22-september?utm_source=23%20September%202020%20C19&utm_medium=Daily%20Email%20C19&utm_campaign=DfE%20C19

I would like to pay a huge tribute to our whole Trust community, staff, children and parents – everyone has worked in credibly hard to get the new school year working successfully. The government announcement doesn't affect the day to day operation of your school. Although we are experiencing some challenges relating to delays in the covid-19 testing regime that is affecting staffing levels from time to time.

In every incidence our starting point will be to keep classes and schools open to children, within guidance and in a covid-secure way. There may be occasions when classes may not be led by the class teacher, for example if they are isolating awaiting test results or unwell. Should this be the case we will use existing Trust staff to manage classes and keep them open, this may occasionally mean that classes are led by members of our support staff team. On rare occasions we may have to close a class or even a school should staff numbers drop below a safe level, this will only be considered as a last resort and I understand the disruption this causes to families. There are not huge numbers (if any) quality supply teachers that are able to be engaged at short notice currently and we are monitoring the situation careful. I can confirm that everyone is doing their best to ensure that any disruption to children's learning is limited.

Covid-testing should only be requested when one or more symptoms are displayed, sniffles and colds are part of life at school and these should be treated in the same way. With most cases the child attending school as normal. If you have any concerns please discuss directly with your school.

Up until now guidance has stated that a letter advising of a potential case, i.e. someone presenting symptoms and seeking a test should be sent to the school community and then a follow up letter indicating the outcome of the test. This has become increasingly unmanageable as the number of children, parents and staff that have sought tests have gone up, we have also listened to feedback where parents have stated that the daily

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stream of covid-19 'negative' letters are unsettling and unnecessary. From Monday 28th September schools will only be advising on any positive results and what actions are necessary for the school community.

As you may be aware the Trust central team work from offices in Halesworth, under the new government guidance that requires 'office workers' to work from home wherever practical. I have taken the decision to scale back staff here at Halesworth with only a skeleton staff, if you have an enquiry please note that it is best to email rather than telephone. Contact details can be found on the Trust website here:

<https://www.consortiumacademy.org.uk/page/?title=Contact+Us&pid=2>

Another outcome of the restrictions and the impact on staffing is that the Trust has deferred the full implementation of the Curriculum enrichment programme (330-430pm), this may operate at some schools in the Trust in part, but we have delayed the full introduction until the spring term. Where there is parental demand, schools will continue to offer a chargeable extended school provision afterschool.

I am grateful for your support and understanding and as a Trust we are constantly reviewing what we do, with the safety and well-being of our pupils and staff being paramount. The whole Trust team are always willing to receive feedback, where we can improve and also what we are doing well. But, may I remind everyone that our staff are under similar pressures, have similar concerns and have similar priorities to you. Respect, understanding and kindness are commodities that is both free and should be in general circulation now, more than ever.

Yours sincerely

Andrew Aalders-Dunthorne
CEO & Principal