



29<sup>th</sup> March 2022

Dear Parents and Carers

Having had to take the decision to again close the school to some year groups this week, I felt it only right that I email you with an update of what is happening in school with regards to COVID infections, the impact it is having on all of us and how we are responding to the ever changing situation. You have been extremely patient with us but understandably, are now feeling very frustrated for which I apologise.

Each week, senior staff monitor the absences and prepare a spreadsheet that identifies when staff might be back, if they test negative on day 6, 8 or 10. This can be done very effectively during the week but we have found on a Monday or Tuesday, the number can change significantly. To mitigate this, we have already pre-booked a large number of supply teachers, today for example we have 6, and this is on top of the cover supervisor staff we employ (3). There is a shortage of supply staff locally so we did this very early on and have several already booked every day. With 9 extra staff available to cover, we had hoped that this would be enough to keep students in school. We also contacted previous teaching staff and asked if they would offer some days to help and are pleased to see some return.

The impact of supply is not always positive as I am sure you understand. It might be that the teacher is not a subject specialist or the students may feel less confident with them as they are not the usual teacher however, it is preferable to not being in school and we will continue to pre-book these staff.

We have also tried to honour where possible a small number of trips that are directly related to the examination season (e.g. Geography field work) as cancelling these would impact on the students' achievement. I know that some of you have been affected by the bus companies not providing a refund or exchange and on your behalf we have contacted them to try and resolve that issue.

On Monday of last week, there were almost 30 staff who were absent and there was absolutely no option other than enforcing some closures. We monitored it every day and felt that as of yesterday, things would improve but we sadly had further absences which we could not have planned for. In determining who stayed at home, we looked through the cover list to see which year group was most affected, providing a first indication of the main need and then looked at the other days that have been missed to try and ensure that students are not missing the same days. We agreed that year 11 and 13 could not be at home and have tried to limit year 10 and 12 absence but this has been very difficult. Year 7 are also too young to leave unattended at home so we have tried to support here by keeping them in school as well.

As teaching staff are then released to cover other lessons, we are not able to provide live lessons, however the work on Classcharts has been a concern of yours and I have reminded all heads of department today that this work needs to be of a high standard and will be checking this. It should also be followed up by teaching staff so students know that it was worthwhile. As you know, I also teach and expect to be held to account by my head of department for the work I am setting.



Some of you are extremely concerned about the further impact this will have on your child's academic progress and I share that concern. I have gone through every option available to me prior to making the decision to close and it is not done lightly. Please be assured of my absolute intention of trying to keep children in school.

Kind regards

Tim Farrer  
Headteacher