



Friday 29th January 2021

Dear Parents/Carers,

I write to you once again with an update following the latest national announcements and the flurry of related headlines and social media stories (very few, sadly, of which are remotely accurate or supportive in my opinion.)

When I wrote to you in January I was hopeful that some sort of 'normality' would resume after the February Half Term. It sadly seems that that is not the case and – as you know – Boris Johnson has announced plans to extend this third National Lockdown with the majority of schools remaining on reduced capacity until 8th March at the earliest. This is, by Boris Johnson's own admission, because "by definition schools bring many households together, and that contributes to the spread of the virus within the community." I must be clear with you all, once again, that Special Schools are the same as all mainstream schools in this regard; with the added complication that Social Distancing is simply not realistically achievable in our setting for a variety of reasons. Therefore your children remain at risk of contracting or transferring Covid 19 if they are in school, although we will do everything we can to minimise the risk for all those in school, as we have been doing since last year.

We remain of the opinion that the vast majority of our pupils who are Clinically Extremely Vulnerable will (for the reasons outlined above) be safer at home – where that is not the case (and there are a variety of reasons why this might not be) we will work with parents and carers to support as necessary.

I hope that I have made our commitment to all of our pupils and families very clear – and this has not changed. We understand how challenging the past year has been for our families, we understand that every family and every pupil has unique circumstances, and we are keen to support as much as we can whether this is with home learning or within school.

In the same way I hope that you - and they – are also clear on my commitment to my staff. They are quite simply amazing, but they are also human. Many of them are anxious, some of them are Clinically Extremely Vulnerable themselves, and some are parents of children who are Clinically Extremely Vulnerable, many have experienced Covid themselves and some are, unfortunately, still battling the long-lasting effects. I have been working hard (alongside the other Warrington Special School Heads) to try to gain agreement for all of our staff to be prioritised for vaccination. This is not because we want to jump any queue, but simply because research and scientific data shows that Special School staff are more likely to catch Covid than the general population. I am delighted that we have now received this agreement, but I am mindful that the vaccination process, and the impact of vaccination, still takes time and so this will not happen overnight by any means.

On Wednesday 3rd February all parents – whether your child is currently at home or at school – will receive a phone call from a member of school staff. Please do your best to answer the call. The focus of this call will be for the member of staff to gain your decision in relation to the period Monday 22nd February - Friday 12th March inclusive. Please give this some thought beforehand and be ready to tell staff if you are choosing to keep your child at home (a full home learning offer will continue to be in place) or if you feel that you need a full or part time school place for your child. Based on your responses we will then rearrange groups and staffing as necessary to ensure that all pupils (whether at home or school) are being supported with their learning. This will next be reviewed on Wednesday 10th March for the remainder of Spring 2 and in line with the (no doubt) new Government guidance at this time. We will, of course, continue to also follow the self-isolation rules should any of our pupils or staff develop symptoms or test positive for Covid, and we would ask for your continued understanding and support in relation to this.

Yours Faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading 'Lucinda Duffy'. The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial 'L'.

Lucinda Duffy
Headteacher
Fox Wood School