04th January 2021

Dear Parents and Carers

**CORONAVIRUS UPDATE 2021**

I am sure that most of you share my concerns about the risks and impact of the ever changing coronavirus. Things seem to be changing fast at the moment and the situation grows more alarming by the day nationally. I recognise the very vulnerable nature of many of our pupils, given their complex health needs and so I am working closely with staff and medical professionals in school to plan our actions. I am writing to you now to update you on the school’s position, to tell you about action taken so far and to comment on what may lay ahead.

At Foxfield we continue to take every aspect of the COVID advice very seriously as we are working with some of the most vulnerable members of society. As a school we are constantly updating our school risk assessments in line with both local and national guidance. All our risk assessments can be access alongside guidance on the school website. Currently as you are all aware we are in Tier 3 with cases locally at approximately 320 per 100,000, although this has seen a large increase from the middle of December.

The Government advice and new coverage of the current pandemic has been both confusing and contradictory. Therefore I am writing to all parents to inform them of our current plans as a school to remain open to all pupils. This is following the government guidance, which can be found on the school website.

The school is sent information daily from the Department of Education about the coronavirus. This includes advice and guidance for schools to follow etc. However this information sent to Foxfield is nothing that is not shared widely with the public. Some parents have asked about the plans for the future and so I stress that I have no more knowledge about these that you do. Special schools have been instructed to remain open for the time being to all pupils and we would only close Foxfield for one of the following reasons:

1. All schools are instructed to close by the Department for Education and/or Public Health England.
2. Foxfield is instructed to close by Public Health as a result of an identified higher level of risk of transmission of the infection because a pupil or member of staff in school is diagnosed as having coronavirus.
3. Large numbers of staff become infected or follow their union guidance to stay isolated at home, in which case I may have to make a decision in consultation with the Chair of Governors that the school cannot provide a safe staffing level to meet the pupils’ daily health, safety and care needs.

A few parents have already informed me that they want to withdraw their child from school for the time being and isolate them at home. Given the circumstances I will not object if any parent or carer decided to do this with their son or daughter. It will certainly not result in any official consequences concerning their school attendance as we will simply record their absence as ‘COVID related exceptional circumstances’. If as a parent/ carer you would like to keep your Son/ Daughter at home please let the school know and we will be in contact to offer guidance and arrange remote learning.

Looking ahead as a school we will do our utmost to stay open to all pupils whilst it is safe to do so. If this can’t be achieved we will work with families to support as best we can. I can appreciate that if this happens it will be very difficult for our pupils and their families in particular, if this goes on for a number of weeks like during the previous lockdown.

To try and ensure we keep the school open we have signed up to the Government testing scheme for all secondary schools. This will start immediately when we receive the tests in the next week. As the guidance suggests we will be testing staff on a weekly basis or if they show any signs or symptoms. We will also have the opportunity of supporting pupils to get tested by themselves (via verbal prompting) or via parent involvement. We will not be physically administrating the tests on pupils as we have only been trained to supervise the test procedure. If you consent to the weekly COVID testing we will be in contact to organise how we can safely do this for your son/ daughter.

If we are unable test your son/ daughter they are still able to access school but if they come into contact with a positive case they will have to isolate for 10 days. If pupils have symptoms they will still need to isolate for ten days or until they have a negative test.

Could I therefore ask that as a matter of urgency that all parents and carers complete and return the attached form to your child’s teacher at Foxfield. We will treat this information as confidential and will keep it securely as stated in the attached privacy statement.

I will do my best to keep parents and carers informed of any developments relating to Foxfield School as a result of the coronavirus. This is an uncertain time for us all but in school we are doing to best to keep the school open to all pupils.

Yours sincerely,

MARTIN MCKENNA

HEADTEACHER