

Ref: GWA/JWH

11 June 2021



Dear Families

When I last communicated with you on Friday 28 May, I spoke positively about us being in a good place with no reported Covid cases at the school, the numbers of positive cases in Tewkesbury at only 3 in 100,000 people and the prospect of sunshine over the Bank Holiday weekend. How things change!

Only a fortnight later we are now at 51 cases per 100,000 people in the Tewkesbury area compared to the England average of 30. We have also had two reported cases of children testing positive this week at school with one in Y7 and one in Y8. This has led to the enforced 10 day self-isolation for two members of staff and approximately 50 children identified as close contacts. All those families have been contacted and remote learning begins from today as in previous lockdowns for those students.

I do not profess to have the medical expertise to explain this sudden rise but the transmissibility of the new Delta variant coupled with the recent relaxation of restrictions on indoor mixing and some student behaviours during half-term are undoubtedly having a negative effect. We are now set to hear more from the Prime Minister on Monday about the next stage of relaxation, currently scheduled for 21 June. Newspaper reports tend to suggest this is likely to be deferred by either a fortnight or possibly 4 weeks due to the increase in cases.

So, more importantly, what are the implications for your children and our school?

First and foremost, are our continued attempts to keep the issue at the front of the minds of our children and families. Secondly, we continue with our controls at school in relation to cleaning, deep cleaning, sanitation of classrooms, the use of hand sanitiser and encouraging the frequent washing of hands. **The purpose of today's communication is not to admonish anyone but to simply plead for your support.** Data suggests it is secondary age children, those in their 20s and other unvaccinated groups that are now most susceptible to the virus and are the chief carriers. Evidence presenting itself to me this week is that infections are highly localised, even within Tewkesbury itself.

I remain disappointed with the number of children who are not routinely self-testing with test kits provided by the school and recording those results with the school and the NHS. Families were asked to continue with voluntary self-testing during half-term and to test their children before they returned to school after the holiday. This protects both them and the broader community. I am concerned with the number of sleepovers I am hearing about and the amount of household mixing. I am also unconvinced that all of the 50 children instructed to self-isolate will actually follow the guidance to remain at home. Sadly, my experience this week is that many of the infections are highly localised and are borne out of a failure to adhere to the guidance.

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My role is to protect both the health and wellbeing of your children but also to maintain as consistent and high quality of education as possible. The behaviours of some children outside of school are not helping with either of these and I implore you all to remain vigilant and commend those of you who are doing just that.

I look forward to a more positive update in the not too distant future. In the meantime, we will continue to do everything we can to protect your children's health and education.

With very best wishes



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