



11<sup>th</sup> December 2020

Dear Parents and Carers

### **Update: End of Term Arrangements and Increase in Positive Cases of Covid-19 in Sydenham School**

I am writing with an update on the arrangements for the end of term and an important update about an increase in positive cases of Covid-19 at Sydenham School.

#### **End of Term Thursday 17<sup>th</sup> December:**

As we outlined in the whole school letter dated Wednesday 9 December, we are changing the date of the end of the Winter term. This is to support the school community in self-isolating for a shorter period and to reduce the risk of the school needing to operate a contact tracing system from Christmas Eve onwards. We very much appreciate your understanding in this matter.

Term will now end on Thursday 17<sup>th</sup> December, with the following dismissal times for students:

Year Group	Dismissal Time
Year 7	2.30pm
Year 8	2.20pm
Year 9	2.15pm
Year 10	2.10pm
Year 11	2.10pm
Year 12*	1.40pm
Year 13*	1.40pm

\*Lessons at Forest Hill continue until the end of period 2 on Friday 18<sup>th</sup> December.

#### **Increase in Positive Cases of Covid in Sydenham School**

We have seen a significant increase in the number of positive cases of Covid-19 in Sydenham School over the past week. This is similar to the situation in many London schools. We now have large numbers of students self-isolating in several of our year groups and a number of staff self-isolating as well. Our senior and support staff are now spending a significant proportion of their time operating the contact tracing process. We are very dedicated to keeping the school safe and our team is now regularly working on this late into the night, very early in the mornings and throughout the weekend. I would like to profoundly thank those school staff who have been at the forefront of this work. It is hugely appreciated.

We have been very grateful for the support of the vast majority of families, who have been extremely understanding of the measures that we have had to put in place. The swift action of many families has enabled us to reduce the risk of contracting the virus on the school site. The rate of incidence of Covid-19 in Sydenham School is comparatively lower than a number of other schools and this is due in part



to the fact that the vast majority of families are following the national and school protocols. We are very grateful to every one of those families for this excellent work and support of the school.

However, we are very concerned about the actions of a small minority of families. It is my duty to share these with you so that we ensure these issues do not occur again. Our concerns are as follows:

- Some students have been sent by families for a test for Covid-19 because of mild symptoms, but these students have continued to attend school until the test result has arrived. This is against our Covid-Safe Code of Conduct and a breach of national public health guidelines laid down by the government. Some of these students have gone on to test positive for Covid-19. The longer duration of exposure has meant that we have sent home more students and staff for self-isolation than would otherwise have needed to be the case. **If a student has been tested for Covid-19 because they have symptoms, or a family member has symptoms and is awaiting a test, all the family must self-isolate until a test result is received. If a family member tests positive then of course the whole family, and any direct contacts, will need to self-isolate too.**
- Some parents/carers have been resistant to our decisions to send a student home when we have a concern about symptoms. Please find government guidance [here](#). As a school, we are including diarrhoea and sneezing as relevant symptoms.
- In other instances, it has been very difficult to reach contacts during the school day, seriously slowing down the process of sending a student home to self-isolate. **Please ensure the school has an up to date list of contacts for your child. If the school contacts you about the need for your child to self-isolate and get tested, please support the decision of our school staff.** If you think the school may not have up-to-date list of contacts for your child, please contact [info@sydenham.lewisham.sch.uk](mailto:info@sydenham.lewisham.sch.uk) with the relevant details.
- In some instances, parents/carers have not informed the school immediately of a positive test result. This delay increases risk and needless disruption to the school community. Unfortunately, we do not receive automatic notification of test results via the national Test and Trace programme. We are reliant on the swift and mindful action of families. **If your child receives a positive Covid-19 test result, it is essential that you contact the school without delay in one of the following ways:**
  - a. *Between 8am and 5pm Monday to Friday:* Please telephone our Reception and inform them of the situation. Please ask to speak with a member of the Senior Leadership Team.
  - b. *From 5pm to 8am or over the weekend or holidays:* Please email [covid@sydenham.lewisham.sch.uk](mailto:covid@sydenham.lewisham.sch.uk) with a copy of the positive result and a contact telephone number. Please copy in Ms Wijnberg ([e.wijnberg@sydenham.lewisham.sch.uk](mailto:e.wijnberg@sydenham.lewisham.sch.uk)) and Ms Gostling ([d.gostling@sydenham.lewisham.sch.uk](mailto:d.gostling@sydenham.lewisham.sch.uk)) to your email.



- We are aware of some instances in which self-isolating students are meeting up in other people's households or are leaving their house to visit the shops. This is an illegal and potentially reckless act which significantly risks the health of the entire community. **If your child has been identified as a contact, they must self-isolate within the home until the date specified by the school. It is your responsibility as a parent/carer to make sure that your children do this.**

As you will see from the media coverage, schools will continue with contact tracing throughout the start of the Christmas holidays up until December 23rd. Our staff team willingly accept this responsibility as a duty to help keep us all safe, and we thank you, in advance, for your cooperation in supporting this over the next two weeks and into the New Year.

Yours faithfully

Gloria Lowe  
Headteacher