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Head Teacher: Mr M Hickey BA(Ed), PE QTS

Re: Omicron Update

Dear Parents / Guardians,

There is a lot of information in this letter and I would appreciate you reading it in its entirety to get a full picture of Highwood's approach to dealing with the new Omicron Variant and the measures we currently have in place to help keep the school open.

On Tuesday 14th December I attended a Headteacher briefing with the Local Authority, where schools were tasked with reviewing their Business Continuity Plans in light of the Omicron variant. This means that we are reviewing what additional measures may need to be in place to help keep the school open and what circumstances may require us to switch to remote learning for some, or all, of our classes.

To be completely transparent with the processes the school follows, our Outbreak Management Planning consists of the following:

- Each day we update the Wokingham's Covid-19 Task Force with all of our positive case monitoring details.
- If a close contact group is getting close to the threshold (10% of the class), we put in additional measures to limit the risk of wider school transmission (this may take the form of children in the affected classes eating lunch in their classrooms and/or playing in a separate space to the other classes on the playground).
- If a close contact class group gets to 10% positive cases, I attend a risk assessment meeting with Wokingham's Covid-19 Task Force.
- In this meeting the school is advised by the Task Force of the measures that need to be put in place to contain the outbreak. One of the measures to stop in school transmission is for the class to switch to remote learning for a short period of time in order for the close contact group to take a PCR test. NB: When we recently used this measure with our Year 3 cohort, it picked up an additional 4 positive Covid cases, where children were not showing any symptoms.
- When there are positive cases in a household, we are also encouraging children to isolate and take a PCR test on day 3 (when they are most likely to be infectious) so that we are confident that children attending school are not carrying the infection. This, again, is part of the advice we are receiving from Wokingham's Health Protection Team. NB: This may change under new guidance and require those who are close contacts (including children) to take daily lateral flow tests for 7 days. I will share more information as it comes in to school.

The measures listed above are vital to protect children, staff and families and make sure that the operational integrity of the school is still intact. To add context, for the school to be able to safely operate we need:

- A member of senior staff who has completed the full Designated Safeguarding Lead training – at Highwood we have 4 members of staff with this training.
- A member of the admin team to be able to complete the register documents.
- A minimum number of adults to be able to provide teaching for each class and support for children requiring 1:1 provision.

Some classes may switch to remote learning due to us enacting our Outbreak Management Plan or because it is not possible to have classes in school due to staff absence. I understand that children are low risk, but if we have an outbreak in school and adults then test positive, I simply won't have enough staff to cover the classes safely. I hope this information makes the decision-making process clear.

Thank you for your continued support and I hope you have a lovely break over the Christmas period.

Best Wishes,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M Hickey'.

Matt Hickey
Headteacher
Highwood Primary School