



Saint Joseph's
Catholic Primary School

Friday 16th October 2020

Dear Parents/Carers

Governors met last night to review the school's COVID-19 risk assessment. They are very appreciative of how parents/carers and staff have worked together to make the full reopening of school so successful. Children and staff have adapted brilliantly to the new normal.

As you are all aware, as of Wednesday, under the new Government Rotherham will fall within the new Tier 2 restrictions. Rotherham's infection rate has climbed from 9.8 cases at the start of September to 170 cases per 100,000 and rising. Already, there are a growing number of schools having had to close bubbles and in some cases fully close. When a bubble or school closes, children have to self-isolate for 14 days; this could happen at a moment's notice, including weekends, self-isolation means that you are not allowed outside for any reason.

Although governors recognise that the early closure on Friday causes difficulties for some families, it has been agreed that this will continue until Christmas, when it will be reviewed again. Parental concerns around children missing learning were raised and I would like to address some of your worries regarding this.

- Closing early on Friday equates to around 2 hours learning time (1:00 pm to 3:00/3:15pm)
- Children are being taught the full core curriculum as well as RE, Forest School and PE and Topic.
- School now opens at 8:30 to support working families, so that by 8:50 all children have started learning this prompt start allows an extra 10 minutes per day (gaining 50 minutes a week)
- Prior to COVID school held three assemblies per week which accounted for approximately 1 hour. Gathering the whole school together inevitably takes up learning time but is an important part of school life. Children are still having assemblies in class via zoom which runs at around 15 minutes per week (gaining 45 minutes per week)
- The strict timetable, staggered breaks and lunchtime ensures that further time-slippage in the school day is no longer an issue as the children hang coats up in the classroom and are straight back to work
- The core subjects are taught in the morning; therefore, children are receiving quality teaching by their class teacher every day.
- Teachers by law have to have 2 hours 30 minutes non-contact time each week. Prior to COVID, staff worked in different classes during the week. If we carried on with this model, it could mean that if a member of staff tested positive, more than one class would have to go into self-isolation.
- Friday afternoon allows for teaching staff to have non-contact time without the need for other staff to cross contaminate bubbles, therefore mitigating the risk of infection.

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- Friday afternoon also allows a thorough deep clean of school and the quarantine of resources for example reading books and equipment, before they are used the following week.

By the next review, governors have asked school to look at what provision could be made on a Friday afternoon in terms of child care/enrichment activities, initially for children of working parents, if the infection rate has reduced and we are no longer on a high status of alert.

Concerns have also been raised about the end of day. Government guidelines state that schools must stagger the start and end times of the school day. Since September we recognise that the end of day has been more challenging than the start of day. Therefore, after half term it has been agreed to lengthen the school day by 15 minutes, with the earliest home time being 3:00pm (gaining 1 hour of learning time per week). Siblings will continue to go home at the earlier time: whole class teaching will end at 3pm in KS2, with revision activities taking place until their allocated home time.

End of day will be as follows:

Class	Time	Pick up point
FS2	3:00 pm	Main Reception
Year 1	3:00 pm	White fire door
Year 2	3:00 pm	Yard
Year 3	3:05 pm	White fire door
Year 4	3:10 pm	White fire door
Year 5/6	3:15 pm	White fire door

In addition to normal staff illness, it is inevitable that until there is a vaccine, some staff will have to self-isolate and work from home. Staff are already trialling new approaches to teaching remotely. And a parent survey around this can be accessed on class dojo. If you have not already completed this, please do so.

School is also currently developing remote learning policies including safeguarding of children online which we will share with you next week. In light of what is happening around us, school has managed to stay open. However, I believe there will be significant challenges next half term to keep all pupils in school. Therefore, it is important to recognise that to keep school open requires a lot of hard work from everybody, the decisions that are made are to ensure the safety for the children and staff in school.

Kind regards

Mrs H McLaughlin

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