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General Update including COVID cases: 5th November 2020

Dear Parents / Carers,

As we approach the end of our first week back this term, I want to update you with COVID cases but also share three good news stories too.

COVID Case Update:

Since we have started back, we have had a number of positive cases reported in Years 8 and 10 this week. Given the higher rates transmission that have led to the national lockdown, this may be a feature of school life for a while yet.

We have had a Year 8 positive test result reported today with 31 students self-isolating, two Year 10 positive results reported today with 48 students self-isolating and one Year 10 test result that was delayed due to testing capacity from last term but that has led to 13 students self-isolating. Following the advice we have received, we have contact traced close contacts and asked them to self-isolate. All parents have been informed by parent mail

COVID is also impacting on our staff, just like others in our communities with some of them having to self-isolate due to being contacted by track and trace or their own children being identified by other schools or nurseries as close contacts. So far we have been able to secure high quality cover for classes but we will need to keep a careful watch on that capacity over the next few weeks, as I know agencies are telling us demand is very high. One of our contingency plans covers the eventuality that we do not have enough staff in school to be able to operate full in school provision but we would want to avoid implementing that until it became an absolute necessity. I mention it as I believe it is important for the school community to know that staff at school are impacted by COVID as well.

Finally, for this section, can I remind everyone that if you or your child develops COVID symptoms please remain at home, self-isolate and get a test. Please let us know the results as quickly as possible as this allows us to rapidly identify close contacts and minimise risks to others.

Government Guidelines - Hands, Face, Space

Please continue to support the work we are doing in school to keep students safe by reiterating the need for students to clean their hands frequently, wear masks (and have a spare or two) and keep their distance. The last point is particularly important as I have received a couple of emails since September from members of the community to say they have seen students not following that guidance. The government has, from today, made it mandatory for all users of school to wear masks in communal areas. This supports the approach that we took early in Term One. Individuals are allowed exemptions based on communication of medical issues from parents and we issue exemption cards. The government has also updated guidance on ventilation which means that whilst we need to keep rooms well ventilated this can be reduced if the weather is too cold. We have also allowed students to wear coats in class if they are feeling cold.

Good news: Update on Laptops to support self-isolating students

On a more positive note, we continue to purchase additional laptops for students that require them and are using part of our COVID catch up funding to support this. I understand we are soon able to deploy additional government supplied laptops that will be distributed in a similar fashion.

Good news: Update on Year 8 area - landscaping

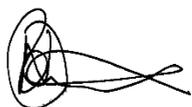
Also on a positive note, to support the school operating Year group bubbles, we have commenced a range of improvement works to upgrade our grounds to make them suitable for the higher use they are getting in the winter months. Today work has started on a new landscaped area for Year 8s that will provide raised outdoor seating and dry level ground for them to use. These works are expected to be completed by 9th November. We have already undertaken some similar work in the Year 7 and 11 areas and have more planned in the Year 7 area later this year

Good News: Seven Saints of St Pauls Mural unveiled

We are very pleased to have taken delivery of our wonderful tribute to the Seven Saints of St Pauls created by former Fairfield Student Michelle Curtis. The artwork features prominently in our atrium and is a fitting reminder of the positive impact people in our local communities have had. This is one of sequence of works to further promote the positive of a diverse range of people locally. If you are unfamiliar with the Seven Saints or Michelle , you can find out more here:

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p06cfxrh>

Best wishes



Nick Lewis

Principal

An International Academy

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