

14 June 2021

Dear Parent / Carer

Thank you for your continued support – I wanted to let you know that the Government's decision today to extend lockdown beyond 21 June will have no bearing on your child's education at Birchwood.

Although case rates remain relatively low in East Herts, there are rising cases of the Delta variant, first identified in India, in some areas of Hertfordshire. We know that this variant is more easily transmitted to others, so it's vital that we all remain vigilant at this time despite the good news on the vaccination front. We have reminded staff and students of the basics – hands, face, space and good ventilation and we will continue with additional cleaning measures. Teachers will also continue to wear face masks where they are unable to maintain 2m+ social distancing.

Can you please continue with the Monday and Thursday Lateral Flow Testing for your child – staff are doing the same. I know this is an extra chore on top of everything else, but it does make a difference and although we have had very few positive test results across our school community, in these cases it helped reduce the spread significantly within the family. We are also advising any close contact of someone who tests positive for Covid-19 to book a PCR test, again this helps us to limit transmission and reduce the risk of outbreaks.

Reporting:

On other matters, the school is a little less populated now with Year 11 and 13 having completed their studies. We are currently in the process of sending their centre assessed grades to the exam boards for checking and moderating but their approach to this rather unusual year has been exemplary and I wish them the best with their results in August (Year 13 Tuesday 10 August / Year 11 Thursday 12 August).

With Years 7-10 and 12, we are continuing to teach and assess progress, reporting to you as follows:

- Year 8 Report - published 18/6
- Year 7 Report - published 25/6
- Year 9 Report - published 2/7
- Year 10 Report - published 16/7

eSafety:

My assemblies last week covered a number of topics including the importance of eSafety. There is no doubt that we are all now far more IT skilled and dependent on the internet than pre-pandemic. Students need to make sure that any information or visual images they source come from a reliable person source. Equally, they should make sure that their security settings for social media devices protect them from offensive material or unwanted harassment. Students also have to be careful about what they send and to whom. If your child is under the age of 16, you have a responsibility to check their mobile devices – and whilst this is sometimes difficult to do – it is a legal responsibility. We have also told them to speak to their form tutor if they are worried about any aspect of eSafety so we can support them and inform you.

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Principal - Dr Chris Ingate

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Equalities:

Birchwood is proud of its inclusive ethos and its intolerance of anyone with racist, homophobic or gender-based behaviour. It is good to see 'Fusion' back supporting and educating on LGBTQ+ and Racism – joined now by 'Ocean' – a steering group of Sixth Formers focussing on misogyny and gender harassment. I am always amazed by our students' capacity to show tolerance and respect to each other, supported with equal tenacity by the staff at Birchwood. It is an aspect of the school that rightly so was judged to be an outstanding feature of life at the school by Ofsted.

Practically speaking:

We lost a number of training opportunities for staff during the Covid lockdown so we are planning to close the school at **1:30pm on Tuesday 29 June** in order to do staff CPD in the afternoon. Bus companies will be informed.

Please can you also note that the road opposite Parsonage Lane (Manor Links) will be closed from 21-28 June due to building works. I know that a number of you drop your child off or collecting them away from the school, in places like Manor Links which helps with congestion but you might want to make alternative arrangements for these 7 days.

Finally, thank you for ensuring that your child is wearing correct uniform. There were very few students with incorrect uniform or footwear when we conducted a fire drill last week. Supplies are now better in the shops and with Fosters. With the hotter weather, we are allowing students to carry their blazers around school. Some children are still coming to school wearing jumpers which is unnecessary – these would be better reserved for the winter months.

Thank you for your continued support.

Yours sincerely

Chris Ingate

Dr Chris Ingate
Principal