

Letter to all parents and carers

Education & Learning

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Dear parents and carers

Before we conclude the first half term of this new school year, I wanted to take a moment to thank you and your children for your patience and understanding while teaching staff have worked incredibly hard to prepare and adapt to changes at school designed to reduce the spread of coronavirus. I also want to thank our students for their overwhelming positive response in accommodating the changes at school.

I would like to take this opportunity to update you on the wider coronavirus picture. Devon, overall, still has comparatively low numbers of positive cases – seven of our eight District areas remain lower than the national average. However, the number of positive cases across the county has risen in line with the national increase.

In Exeter, like so many university cities, we have seen numbers rising significantly, centred mostly around the university's student population. In response, the University introduced additional measures on top of their already comprehensive strategy to stop infection. These include extending the restriction of movement between their student households on campus and within their student accommodation. Public Health information shows that the rest of the city is around the national average, there is no evidence at this time of significant spread of the virus between student and non-student populations in Exeter.

During this first half term, many of our schools have seen small numbers of pupils, either with symptoms of coronavirus requiring them to self-isolate, or who have tested positive and therefore need to self-isolate. However, even small numbers of pupils testing positive can disrupt learning as it means that many more pupils who have been in the same bubble have to self-isolate at home.

Schools have therefore needed to work hard to try to blend face-to-face teaching, for those still in school, with the provision of online or paper-based learning for children self-isolating at home. Please note schools do not need to provide learning at home for those pupils who do not need to self-isolate.

For those pupils who are self-isolating, I ask you to ensure that they remain at home and are not socialising with people from outside of their household. If your child has been sent home for 14 days to self-isolate, it's vital that they do just that for the full duration. That means staying at home for no fewer than 14 days unless they are given the all clear to return to school. It also means having no friends or visitors over during that self-isolation period.

I would also like to remind parents of younger-aged children to follow the national guidance when they come to drop off or collect their child from school. That is, to follow the 2 metre social distancing rules, and when in busier and noisier environments where social distancing is difficult, to wear face coverings. It is likely that parents who talk outside of school do not do so in the same bubbles as their children and these simple steps not only protect you, but they also protect everyone else from the spread of coronavirus.

As some people may have COVID but not show any symptoms (i.e. the high temperature, new and continuous cough, or change to the usual sense of taste or smell) it is really important for everyone to follow social distancing and hand hygiene measures to stop spread, including when socialising out of school or when participating in extracurricular activities.

We have some helpful [Frequently Asked Questions](#) on our website, to help parents know what to do if their child develops symptoms, as well as other advice.

With regards to the national news this week about schools remaining closed for an extra week in addition to the half term holiday, we are in regular liaison with our headteachers and we are all keeping a close watch on changing Government guidelines, including the possible extension of half term.

In normal times, schools determine their own holiday dates within the academic year and some Devon schools already choose to have two-week autumn half terms and shorten their holidays at other times. Individual schools will inform you of any changes to their term dates.

Finally, I know that schools are in regular contact with you, to keep you informed and to quickly alert you to any changing situation at school. Your child's education, health and wellbeing is as of vital importance to us and your school, as it is to you, and I ask that you continue to work with your school and that you support them in their efforts. For this reason, if your child tests positive for coronavirus please ensure that you keep them and any siblings at home and that you notify the school immediately.

In anticipation of your child's well-deserved half term break, I wish you and your families a safe and healthy holiday.

Yours sincerely,



Dawn Stabb

Head of Education & Learning