



The Consortium Trust

Where together excellence and pupils thrive

21st October 2021

Important update – Trust response to rising Covid-19 cases
Information for all staff and parents

Dear School Community,

As you may be aware in the media, there are rising numbers of COVID-19 infections in the community and I am writing to advise you of some additional measures that we will be taking with effect from the 1st November and other measures that may need to be introduced in the coming weeks and months.

I have based the Trust response to this ongoing public health matter on the statutory guidance issued by the Department for Education, feedback from school leaders and the recent letter from the Director of Public Health in Suffolk (attached). I would also like to make clear that the following response applies to all our settings in Suffolk and Norfolk.

Throughout the pandemic the Trust and our exceptional staff have endeavoured to ensure that:

- Risks to health, physical and mental, have been mitigated as much as possible;
- The delivery of education including a broad and balanced curriculum continues to give a positive experience for our pupils.

It is important to note that we are not legally allowed to exclude pupils from accessing education at school because they may have a cold, sniffle or an intermittent cough. Pupils are only required to isolate from school if they have tested positive to COVID-19, initially recording a positive Lateral Flow Test which is then confirmed by a PCR test.

As the Suffolk Director of Public Health states, the following measures will be introduced from the 1st November and reviewed at two weekly intervals, with the first review being undertaken on the 15th November:

- I have recalled the Trust's Critical Incident Team, who will evaluate on a weekly basis the situation for our schools and our communities and will advise me;
- All settings will review and update their COVID-risk assessments;
- All non-essential visitors will not be permitted into our school buildings, this unfortunately includes parents. Where schools have parent consultation meetings planned these will be online, where schools have arranged 'events' in the first two weeks of the term these must be outdoors, virtual or postponed;
- Staff (unless essential) should restrict movement between settings, with only one setting attended per day wherever possible;
- Meetings should be held virtually wherever possible;
- ALL visitors to wear a face covering when on the premises including the central office;
- Staff can use their discretion, in line with locally agreed practices on whether face coverings should be worn in communal areas. It is noted that due to the physical size of the school this may be deemed to be an inefficient practice.
- Lateral flow testing and vaccinations continue to be strongly encouraged to all our staff.

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I would like to reassure all staff and parents that the impact of COVID-19 remains comparatively low in all our settings. We should not be unduly alarmed, but some sensible additional measures now will maintain our current position and ensure that we are all taking care of each other. None of the additional measures will have an impact on the delivery of the curriculum or the pupil experience, all classes, activities and educational visits will continue. Subject to a satisfactory risk assessment and measures that protect the well-being of all.

Looking slightly further forward and while I truly hope we do not need to entertain this, it would be wise for all settings to have planned events that can be switched to a virtual event. We all 'missed out' on Christmas last year and I sincerely hope that the wonderful events planned in our schools and nurseries; Nativities; carol services; performances, lunches and parties will go ahead. Let's prepare for the best and plan for the worst.

I am sorry to be writing to you about COVID-19, but would like to record my thanks to the efforts of our whole Trust community over the first half term and wish everyone a very happy half term break.

Yours faithfully

Andrew Aalders-Dunthorne
CEO & Principal



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A message from Stuart Keeble, Director for Public Health

"We have seen the number of Suffolk pupils with Covid-19 increase so are working with schools to implement these additional measures immediately to help break the chain of transmission. We are taking these numbers seriously and school leaders are being extremely vigilant to ensure children and staff are safe. If parents have concerns, we advise them to speak to their schools who will be able to reassure parents of the measures they are taking. Our main focus is to balance pupil and staff safety whilst giving children as positive and normal education as possible."

The case rate in 10–14-year-olds increased by almost 15% - from 2,246 cases per 100,000 population on 6 October, to 2,581 cases per 100,000 on 13 October. The case rate in 15–19-year-olds increased by 32% from 952 cases per 100,000 population on 6 October, to 1,260 cases per 100,000 on 13 October. As such, face masks and restrictions on visitors are to be reintroduced to Suffolk schools to help slow the current rate of transmission in education settings.

SCC are advising that the following measures be implemented from Monday 1 November 2021:

Staff in education settings (specialist, primary, secondary, further and higher education) to wear face coverings in communal areas outside of the classroom, unless exempt for medical reasons.

Students in all secondary, further and higher education settings to wear face coverings in communal areas outside of the classroom, unless exempt for medical reasons.

Specialist, primary, secondary, further and higher education settings to restrict entry to their site to essential visitors only. Essential visitors would be those from Health, Social Care and Specialist Education teams delivering direct support to children and young people and visits focussed on safeguarding. It is important that these activities continue.

Any visitors to wear a face covering while on-site, this includes adults collecting children in the playground.

These measures will be reviewed during the week commencing Monday 15 November 2021.

We also strongly recommend that all staff and students test before returning to schools and settings after half term.

Once again thanks go out to all you are doing to keep all safe and reduce transmission of the virus. Whilst we cannot control what happens in the wider community your continued vigilance in and around schools and settings is much appreciated.

These additional measures will add to the existing measures you are taking including regular hand washing, social distancing and ventilation.