



Leppington, Birch Hill, Bracknell, RG12 7WW
Headteacher: Michael Dillon B Ed (Hons) MA

Friday, 10 December 2021

Dear Parents/Carers,

COVID update

You will be aware that new guidance has been issued this week by the Government.

The latest guidance for parents and carers is linked below.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/what-parents-and-carers-need-to-know-about-early-years-providers-schools-and-colleges-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-outbreak/step-4-update-what-parents-and-carers-need-to-know-about-early-years-providers-schools-and-colleges>

There is no change in how we operate. The expectation is that school remains open and children come to school. As we approach the Christmas holidays please ensure you are following the guidance on overseas travel should you be travelling abroad, including the required isolation on return from abroad.

Currently we have an outbreak in Year 5 (9 cases) and small numbers of cases in other year groups.

Year 6 – 4 cases

Year 3 – 3 cases

Year 4 – 3 cases

We will always inform parents when there is one case in their year group, update if that increase to 3 cases and then update again if there is an outbreak with 5 or more cases. We are not able to update on numbers every day.

We know that regular testing is picking up asymptomatic cases, which is contributing to the high numbers. The situation changes daily, with new positive cases being registered, while others are returning from self-isolation. On top of this, we have our normal winter illnesses/virus that is affecting staff absence.

As I hope you can appreciate, all of this is putting a huge strain on our capacity to keep the school open and run as normal. As I said recently, please bear with us if we are not returning calls, or communication is not as regular as normal. Our main priority is to ensure we keep the school open, provide children with high-quality learning opportunities and to support their wellbeing. I also need to ensure that I am supporting staff through this challenging time.

Below are answers and further guidance that I hope you find useful. Please do let us know if there are any questions or concerns.

What is the school doing to minimise the spread of Covid in school?

- Children to stay in year group as much as possible
- Lunches are served in classroom (apart from Reception and Y1 who are using the main hall)
- Children to have break-time and lunchtime play in their year group
- Assemblies are held virtually
- Staff and all visitors to wear masks while on site
- Staff to keep 2m distance
- Continue to maintain cleaning procedures and hand hygiene procedures
- When there is a positive case, inform staff and parents in that year group and encourage them to book their child a PCR test followed by regular lateral flow tests and follow latest advice.
- Continue to hold meetings virtually

How are these measures impacting on school events?

We are trying to ensure children are still provided with high-quality learning opportunities whilst remaining safe. Therefore, some events will be rearranged and others will be modified.

- School photos rearranged for 26th January 2022
- We have cancelled the Young Voices event at the O2 in London in January and will update parents on the situation with refunds in January.
- Christmas Dinner – we will still serve Christmas dinner on Wednesday 15th December, but it will be in class for children in Y2-Y6.
- Unfortunately parents will not be able to come and watch Christmas Nativity plays. These will be recorded and published online.

What can parents do to minimise the spread of COVID on school?

- We are finding that regular lateral flow testing is picking up cases before symptoms develop so we encourage all families to use regular lateral flow testing
- Get a PCR test when directed and send us the result as soon as possible by emailing covidtest@birchhillprimaryschool.co.uk
- To wear a mask while on site
- Not to come into the school building
- Continue to hold meetings virtually
- Ensure that isolation rules are being followed if anyone in the family tests positive. It is a legal requirement that anyone testing positive self-isolates for 10 days and they should not be out and about in the community during this period.

What will happen if my child's teacher is off sick?

We will always endeavour to cover teacher absence and this will include;

- Use High Level Teaching Assistants (HLTAs)
- Book a supply teacher (although this is getting harder)
- Putting the whole year group together in the school hall

If there is no cover, and please be assured it would be the last option, we will close a year group for a short period of time.

Should my child come to school?

We fully appreciate that this is an anxious time for parents. If you have any concerns please make sure you talk to us. The guidance is that all children must come to school and any absence will be recorded as

unauthorised. Unauthorised absences are reported to the Education Welfare Service, which may result in a Fixed Penalty Notice being issued from the Local Authority.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Michael M', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Michael Dillon
Headteacher