

Dear Parents and Carers,

I wanted to write to you to give you an update on some of the challenges faced in our schools at the moment. As you will probably be aware from the media, COVID cases are a lot higher in the South West than in other parts of the country. Some of this seems to be connected to the inaccurate PCR testing from a laboratory, which has since been resolved. We know that several of our staff and pupils received a 'false negative' and were in school when they were carrying the virus, which has spread to others. The virus is far more prevalent than it has been before, leading to a much higher percentage of staff and pupils being affected. In addition to this, cold, flu and the norovirus are making their way through our school populations too, adding further pressure on our ability to staff our schools effectively.

Although this sounds like a worrying picture, please rest assured that our schools are operating normally, the children are in school and are learning. Where we have staff absences, they are covered and as parents you shouldn't be noticing anything different. What we are letting you know, is that this is coming as a result of constant strategic juggling and a daily staffing review. The situation is being managed but we would appreciate your help in keeping them open and everybody safe.

We have kept the vast majority of COVID measures in place in our schools since returning in September. Over the last few weeks, we have tightened them even further and returned to a more strict internal policy of social distancing and mask wearing. Please follow any guidance sent out by our schools and adhere to any guidelines they set out. This includes rules around approaching our sites at drop off and pick up times.

As far as attendance is concerned, please work with us. We want all of our pupils to be in school, learning, laughing and making up for lost time. We also want to keep them, their friends, their families and our staff safe. If, in consultation with you, we advise for them to be kept off school, please do so. We wouldn't ask if it wasn't essential. If any parent is worried about low attendance, then please rest assured that no parent would be fined if it has been mutually agreed to keep them off school. If absence is unauthorised then, of course, the normal rules apply.

Sometimes in school we ask parents for a pupil to get a PCR test. The main reason for this is Lateral Flow testing is far less accurate once a child has symptoms. There have been many instances where a pupil with symptoms has had a negative LFD test followed by a positive PCR.

Apologies for the serious tone of this letter, but we thought you should be fully aware of the challenges we face and how you can help us overcome them. Thank you, as always for your continuing understanding and support.

Kind regards



Mr Gary Evans
Chief Executive Officer
The Blue Kite Academy Trust