Tuesday 6th October 2020

Dear parents,

In the wake of school closure, we have had some enquiries from three of our parents about cross-bubble/group contamination. I’m sure that this is a question on the minds of a few parents. Accordingly, I thought it best to clarify the situation to save having to email back individual parents.

We appreciate that it’s a very frustrating situation, particularly for working parents (as a parent myself, I do understand). As parents know, we have striven as a school to impress upon our community that rules must be followed if the school is to stay open. Unfortunately infection is spreading in the community. It seems that hardly a day goes by that we do not hear of two or three new cases.

It is important to stress that, even though we work hard to reduce risk in school, schools are not risk-free environments regarding Covid-19. Despite government rhetoric, schools are not Covid-secure. However, we work hard and operate to keep risk to a minimum as much as we can.

Even though we work hard to keep groups/bubbles ‘discrete’, there are exceptions. This is recognised by the DfE in their guidance (*Guidance for full opening: schools*).

*“. . . teachers in primary schools can still work across groups if that is needed to enable a full educational offer.”* (https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/actions-for-schools-during-the-coronavirus-outbreak/guidance-for-full-opening-schools)

Accordingly, given this, the vast majority of primary schools will still have staff working across bubbles. It is recognised that bubbles cannot be kept absolutely an island. I repeat, it is about ‘reducing risk’, not ‘eliminating it’ (which would be impossible).

Though we have much-reduced movement in school to limit risk, there are quite a few circumstances in school where staff do need to work across groups/bubbles:

* Our SENDCo needs access to all classrooms to ensure provision.
* Our Senior Leadership Team (SLT) (four staff) need to monitor across the school to ensure quality and support our appraisal process. In addition, and importantly, they need to support and check all is all right at this difficult time.
* Our pastoral (social and emotional support/Thrive ftc team) need access across the school to ensure support and provision for some of our most vulnerable children.
* Planning, Preparation and Assessment cover staff need to cover statutory release for all teachers across the school.
* Sometimes, to cover staff absence, cover teachers need to work across the school.
* We have a shortage of lunchtime supervisors, so, some have to ‘double up’, covering across the school at different times.

In the mix, you have siblings mixing at home which ‘cross-contaminate’ bubbles and children playing in the community together and mixing, we know there is mixing with childminders too.

It needs to be stated that, as yet, there have been no confirmed cases of infection due to the movement of the person concerned (who tested positive), which says something positive about our systems. The closure is precautionary, directed by the DfE.

I hope that helps clarify the situation.

Yours sincerely

Bill Heptinstall