



2 October 2020

Dear Parents and Carers

RE: Pickwick update on the return to school

We are now a month into the Autumn Term so I wanted to write to you to provide an update of how things are going in our schools.

Thank you for supporting our strategy and risk mitigation measures for reopening in September. The schools have all worked tirelessly to put in place an approach that works for them and their communities, carefully considering the different logistics, site access and challenges at each school. Thank you for your constructive feedback about how drop-offs and pick-ups have been working – this has fed into our ongoing reviews over the last month and has helped shape adaptations to our arrangements. We recognise that some of the staggered starts/pick-up arrangements continue to cause some frustrations but it is critical that everyone follows the routines set out by the schools so that we can minimise the risk of transmission to our families and staff.

With the number of cases rising nationally and across Wiltshire, we are now encouraging adults (and children over 11 years) dropping off and collecting children to wear a face covering. If your child's school has already stated that face coverings are required please wear one unless you have an exemption. Please avoid any unnecessary congregating on or outside the school grounds before or after drop-off/pick-up. Face coverings continue to not be required in lessons or transitioning around the school, although if you would like your child to wear one they will be allowed to do so – the child will need to know how to put it on and take it off properly, washing their hands each time, and the covering will need to be clean each day. You will need to supply a sealable plastic bag to store it in when not being worn. Staff are able to choose whether they would like to wear a face covering.

The attendance rate across our schools in September has been high, considering the situation we are in, at an average of 96%. This compares favourably with the national and Wiltshire averages and shows us that you have confidence in the risk mitigation arrangements we have in place. We are now starting to experience a rise in the number of absences due to the usual colds and flus that we experience as the winter season approaches. Whilst we have had several children and adults across our schools self-isolating due to possible COVID symptoms, fortunately all the test results have been returned as negative. We have been contacting you to let you know if someone in your child's bubble is self-isolating and awaiting a test, but are aware that this has increased the number of messages you are receiving from us and has caused some anxiety. We have listened to your feedback about this and will now only contact you in the event that a test returns a positive result.

Since returning we have found that the vast majority of children in our schools have returned enthusiastically and are achieving well with their learning. This is a testament to the high-quality learning materials teachers have made available on school online learning platforms and on paper, and the exceptional work you have done to support your child with their learning during lockdown whilst juggling your own work commitments.

We have also heard that parents have felt more involved in and aware of what their children have been learning, and that stronger connections have been made between home and school. We are keen to build on these successes and continue to work with you as co-partners in your children's learning. Each school is developing a blended learning approach to ensure that learning can be accessed at home to complement learning taking place in school, in circumstances where children are self-isolating and in the event of a local or school lockdown in the future. As we do every year, we are evaluating where the children are in their learning, identifying gaps and misconceptions, and planning high-quality lessons appropriate to each class' needs.

We have noticed that the children are more tired than usual for this time of the year. The significant time out of school for many children during the summer term and adjusting to new school routines, as well as the additional pressures associated with COVID mitigation measures, is causing fatigue for us all. With half-term still two weeks away please bear with us, and thank you for your understanding and support as we continue to strive to do the best we can for our children, families and staff.

I have enjoyed talking to many of you on the school gates over the last few weeks – thank you for your support and feedback. I look forward to talking with more of you over the coming months in our fantastic schools.

Yours faithfully,



James Passmore
Chief Executive Officer
Pickwick Academy Trust
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