



# Poynton High School and Performing Arts College

Head Teacher: Mr D. Waugh

Friday, 06 November 2020

Dear Parents and Carers

## Ref: PHS Covid-19 Update, National Lockdown

I hope that this letter finds you all well, safe and comforted within your families and homes. As we enter the start of our second national lockdown I wanted to take an opportunity to highlight to you updates in regard to our ongoing Covid-19 management. We had a highly successful first half term in managing the virus' impact in school. In total, we have only had 23 positive cases associated with our Poynton family, students and staff. In a family of over 1500 teenagers and adults, that is a very low incidence rate, especially when compared to other schools and similar communities. I cannot thank you enough for your adherence to our new procedures and your encouragement of your children to support us to support them. The main impact of Covid-19 for us has not been on positive cases but through the need to self-isolate due to being a close contact of a positive case. In total, close contact generated self-isolation has led to over 40 staff and over 400 students needing to self-isolate in the first half term. As we enter the winter months I suspect that this may increase and we are now putting in further measures, in light of the guidance from government, to support and protect our Poynton family.

## National Lockdown Guidance

The two main guidance documents to support our planning for the new National Lockdown can be found here:

- New National Lockdown Guidance 5<sup>th</sup> November: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/new-national-restrictions-from-5-november>
- Education and childcare settings: New National Restrictions from 5 November 2020: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/education-and-childcare-settings-new-national-restrictions-from-5-november-2020>

## Summary Key Points

I provide the links to the full versions of the guidance so you can read them if you so wish, however the key pertinent points can be summarised as follows:

- Schools are to remain open.  
Travelling to and from school is one of the very few reasons permitted to leave the house. We are hearing that we will not have government "flick the switch" to tier 2 during this period. Tier 2 is where we are told to go on to a 2-week rota period with half of the school in

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for two weeks and the other half on remote learning, and then vice versa for the next two weeks. However, that does not mean that we will remain fully open throughout this period. Before half term I was very close to having to send a year group home because I simply did not have enough staff due to self-isolation. That position was only saved due to the need for a whole year group to self-isolate due to a number of positive cases across the bubbles. At time of writing, staffing levels are strong and stable however I monitor the situation daily and will update parents and carers accordingly if I need to instigate a partial closure due to staffing levels.

- All extra-curricular activities are to cease.  
The guidance is clear that unless it is specifically child-care orientated, the activity must stop. I am concerned about the impact that this will have on students, they will essentially be ‘caged teenagers’, contained at home, contained in school. I am meeting with our PE team early next week to look at ways that we might be able to seriously upscale the exercise and active participation for students during the school day. As you will be acutely aware, your sons and daughters need to burn off energy and therefore may I encourage you to actively promote exercise with them, within the boundaries of the national guidance.
- Face masks are compulsory on school buses.  
If students are found to not be wearing face masks on school buses they may face a ‘transport ban’, our transport company are deploying inspectors to support on buses to ensure that students adhere to the new national rules.
- The government is absolutely clear, examinations will go ahead next year.  
Now my crystal ball skills are diminished somewhat at the moment however I suspect that we will have exams of some guise, however we are also likely to be asked to rank order students alongside the exam entry. As staff, we are working on the basis that examinations will happen but that we must also have the assessments established in order to be able to accurately rank order students.
- Car sharing should be discouraged.  
If car sharing cannot be avoided then the guidance suggests the following measures:
  - Opening windows for ventilation
  - Travelling side by side or behind other people, rather than facing them, where seating arrangements allow
  - Facing away from each other
  - Considering seating arrangements to maximise distance between people in the vehicle
  - Cleaning your car between journeys using standard cleaning products - make sure you clean door handles and other areas that people may touch
  - Asking the driver and passengers to wear a face covering

### School Buses

It is now compulsory to wear a face mask on the school bus, unless exempt for medical reasons. In addition to this, we are also insisting that students use the hand sanitiser provided when they board the bus and leave the bus. When students are seated they should not turn around in their seat and must sit in their allocated seating areas. We had two instances in the first half term where I had to self-isolate an entire bus because students had ‘moved around’. We are putting in place additional monitoring arrangements and checks however I would be grateful if parents and carers could talk to

their children about the importance of staying within their allocated bubble, using the hand sanitiser and wearing their face masks.

### Travel to and from school

National lockdown will mean that more parents and carers are working from home. If this means that you are now planning on driving your child to school, please ensure that you drop them off away from school site. If you live within 2 miles of site then your children should be walking to and from school. If you live further than 2 miles and are driving them in, please drop them off in the village so that we do not have increased community transmission risk here on site. This worked extremely well in the first half term and I am very grateful for your support on this. As the weather turns on us for the winter months, please be encouraged to continue to get your children to walk to site from a drop off point in the village. Students should come straight to school in the morning and return straight home after school. In order to reduce community mixing we are going to be dismissing students in staggered finishing times at the end of the day; Year 7 at 2.50pm, Years 8 & 9 at 2.55pm and Years 10 and 11 at 3.00pm. Students will be encouraged to clear site immediately and head home as per the national lockdown guidance. In addition to students leaving site in this way, I am encouraging staff to 'leave by 4' so that they are then able to get home and avoid community massing and traffic challenges. Just before half term I invested a further £30,000 in laptops for staff to further increase our home-remote learning capacity and these laptops are now being issues over the next few days. This will allow us to support parents' evenings, remote learning, live lessons and embed Goggle Classroom.

### Car Sharing

This point mainly applies to Year 13 however I would also encourage a reduction in car sharing across families as that is testing the family bubble arrangements within the national guidance. Year 13 should not be car sharing for lifts coming into school/college. I cannot stress enough the impact that we each have on each other. A person you share with could realistically 'take you out' of school for two weeks. Given the expressed wish of the government to continue with examinations as per normal next year, two weeks is a long time to be impacted upon within the remote learning set up rather than in-school support. Please be aware of the impact you have on others, socially distance, wear your mask, sanitise your hands. We are all in each other's hands, never before has one's own normal day to day behaviour had such direct impact on others.

These are very challenging times for all families and I am extremely conscious that you may be experiencing significant changes in your home circumstances. The national framework for supporting young people for families facing hardship to reach their full potential in education uses free school meals as a guide for further support. If your circumstances have changed you may wish to follow the following link to apply for such support:

<https://synergyweb.cheshireeast.gov.uk/Website/Enquiries/Citizen/FreeSchoolMeals.aspx>

Thank you for taking the time to read my updated notes.

We have been extremely successful in mitigating the risk of the virus and many of the points within the national guidance do not have impact as we have already been doing them from the start. We are further looking at half year group bubbles, social bubbles and movement around school with more details to follow in due course.

I have had such positive feedback about all of our procedures and would simply like to encourage you to 'keep going'. Your support over travel to and from school, face masks, jumpers, remote learning, etc. has been tremendous. All of the work we are doing is supported by our local Police Officer's and





PCSO's. They will be monitoring students travelling to and from school, ensuring that they for example do not 'hang around' in the village or go into the shops for unnecessary things. We work very closely with the Police and Local Authority to ensure compliance to the new Covid-19 regulations.

I genuinely hope this letter finds you safe, well and protected in your family bubble.

Yours faithfully,

Mr D Waugh  
Head Teacher