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January 3rd 2021 **EMERGENCY INSET DAY – SCHOOL CLOSED MONDAY 4<sup>TH</sup> JANUARY**

Dear Parents,

I write to you just before the start of Term 3 to update you about our covid safety protocols and the fast-changing covid emergency situation.

It is with a heavy heart that I must write this as our county has very recently moved into Tier 4 – very high alert. Term 3 was due to start on Monday 4<sup>th</sup> January however, in light of the rapidly changing circumstances and uncertainties regarding the safety of schools opening fully, there will be an emergency inset day on Monday 4<sup>th</sup> January when all information and directives will be collated and the risk assessments updated. The staff leadership and governors will be consulting with the local authority and the teaching unions and taking into account any changes in DfE/Government decisions and I will then contact you again on Monday afternoon. The school will remain closed to all children on Monday 4<sup>th</sup>. Staff will also use some of the day to make sure online learning resources are ready to go out to you if the need arises. I appreciate that this could cause upheaval and inconvenience and I apologise for this. Please bear with us as we are being put in a very difficult and uncertain situation and wish only to take the best and safest actions for the school community.

I feel it is my duty as part of the risk assessment process to keep the children, staff and all our school community as safe as possible.

The government has revealed why Gloucestershire has been moved into T4. Data indicates that there is an increase in cases of covid across all six districts that make up the county of Gloucestershire. In the last week the picture in Gloucestershire has further deteriorated with an increase in all epidemiological indicators, in all six regions including ours.

The case rate for all ages is high with more than 60% increases in the past week. Test positivity is at or above 5% across the county and as high as 8% in some parts.

Covid admissions are high to local NHS (Gloucester STP) and increasing, whilst the number in beds is high and increasing in critical care. The rate of increase of epidemiology indicators is concerning and warrants escalation to Tier 4.

I take this information from published, local sources and I have not received any updated guidance from the DfE as yet but I expect it to come after the new term has already begun. I am in the process of reviewing the risk assessments and protocols that we already have in place and I can confirm that the school has been deep cleaned during the Christmas break. However, as the new variant is very new and scientists are trying to find out more about the increased rates of transmission that are becoming

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evident, along with the affect and impact on children, I feel we are entering a new phase of uncharted waters.

I do not write this to be alarmist and I do not wish to cause increased anxiety amongst parents and the local community however, I also feel it is my role to take all the factors and information into consideration when risk assessing and managing the school. During terms 1 and 2 the staff worked incredibly hard making sure the school and all equipment was frequently sanitised and as safe as it could be. Staff also followed all rules, guidance and protocols to maintain the bubbles and all groupings of children and adults, maintaining social distancing as far as humanly possible in a school setting with young children. We will continue to respond to any updates to the guidance however, I am not sure what else we will be able to do that we are not doing already.

The role of parents is obviously extremely crucial and I thank you all for your diligence so far and adherence to the measures we have put in place. These measures will continue as we re-open the school and any new measures will be relayed to you as soon as they are made necessary and put in place. Parents need to be even more responsive to any suspected illness in their children and keep them away from school if there is any doubt that your child is unwell and please seek a test. Any other persons within your household showing symptoms should seek testing and all siblings and household members need to stay away from the school whilst waiting for results. Most children so far who have contracted covid have had relatively mild illness and some have shown few or no symptoms however this does not mean they do not transmit the disease to others who can then become more seriously ill. Sadly, we also find ourselves in a situation where we really do not know yet how the new variant will affect children and how it will be transmitted in school settings. With this in mind I am writing to you before school resumes to ask you for your complete cooperation and due caution.

The staggered arrivals and collections will carry on as last term along with the precautions regarding belongings and movements of the children and staff in and around the school remaining in place. I again remind all parents and adults not to congregate at the front of the school or in other parts of the village. Social distancing must be maintained at all times in accordance with T4 restrictions. Bubble or school closures will happen if there are confirmed positive cases or if there is a staff shortage due to either illness or the need to self-isolate.

Other information about curriculum will be sent out towards the end of week 1 and as stated previously, covid related information and changes to risk assessments/guidance will be sent out as necessary.

As ever, if you have concerns or questions once term starts please send in by email to [admin@hillesley.gloucs.sch.uk](mailto:admin@hillesley.gloucs.sch.uk) or if very urgent by phone – 01453 843551.

I write this in anticipation of your support.

Regards,

J. Pedley

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