

3rd March 2021

Dear Parents and Carers,

We hope that you are all well and that your children are looking forward to returning to school on Monday 8th March. As a group of Whitehaven headteachers, we wanted to say thank you so much for all your support over the last half term. In our recent meeting, every school was able to report how successful home learning had been since Christmas. We know that families across Whitehaven have been working extremely hard in very challenging circumstances. Thank you!

As we return to school on Monday, we start to focus on returning to the classroom and to learning for the future. As a cluster of schools, over the coming weeks, we will be working hard together to look at how all our children have settled back into school life and how well they have progressed with their learning. We intend to work together wherever possible to use all our resources across the schools to ensure that no child is left behind because of this pandemic.

However, we are returning and it is important that everyone continues to follow the national and local guidance to keep our community safe. Please help us all to be safe by continuing to follow social distancing rules, wearing face masks and washing hands - HANDS, FACE, SPACE.

Cumbria Public Health is continuing to support school closely. They have made us aware that the new variant of Covid-19 is highly transmissible. They have shared that there may well be additional symptoms, above the 3 main symptoms of high temperature, new continuous cough and loss or change of smell and taste that we would like you to be aware of. These are:

- Severe Headaches,
- Fatigue,
- Sickness and Diarrhoea,
- Rash,
- Sore Throat.

As a cluster of schools, we ask you not to send children to school, if they, or any member of the house is unwell.

From Monday 8th March, the government have made attendance at school mandatory. We are all in the final preparations for our return. We are aware that some of our children may be shielding and have now been sent shielding letters from the NHS. All cluster schools will be asking to see these letters so that we can report the correct information back to the Department for Education. If parents are shielding and have received a shielding letter, please also let us know so that we can support your family. The DFE guidance states that if parents are shielding then children may return to school as the shielding letter only applies to the parent. If you are a parent who is shielding and unsure about your child returning, please contact your school and medical professional who will provide further advice.

We have been made aware that from Monday 1st March, households, childcare and support bubbles of primary age children are eligible to access Lateral Flow Tests. Staff in all our schools have been using the LFTs since January to test ourselves twice weekly. This has proven successful in both picking up asymptomatic cases as well as giving staff reassurance that the virus isn't being transmitted within schools. We would like to encourage households and support bubbles of our students to access these LFTs and guidance in how to order them can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/rapid-lateral-flow-testing-for-households-and-bubbles-of-school-pupils-and-staff>

Please note that we cannot supply or access these tests for you.

Thank you again for all your support over the past months. We look forward to greeting you all back next week and continuing to make our communities great places to learn.

Warmest Regards,

Whitehaven Primary Cluster Headteachers