



Pensby High School
Irby Road, Heswall, Wirral.
CH61 6XN

T 0151 342 0570
F 0151 342 0571
E schooloffice@psf.wirral.sch.uk
www.pensbyhighschool.org

Headteacher: Mr K Flanagan

6 July 2021

Dear Parents and Carers

I sent home another 51 students in Year 7 yesterday, these are all close contacts to a confirmed case, that is they were sat within two metres in the classroom within the previous 48 hours and I physically walk all the classrooms where they have been taught, or students who have been identified by the case as a close contact; that is someone who has more than passing contact in a confined space. I always send home any identified close contacts and as I have previously written, at this time, and to the best of my knowledge, no student sent home to self-isolate has then gone on to develop COVID as a result of the close contact in school.

I wrote to you on 1st July 2021 to explain how we try to limit the number of students we send home to just those who are clearly linked to a positive case. In many ways the easiest thing to do, would be to close the bubble and send home many more students, but the reality is that I became a teacher and particularly a headteacher, not because of a love of a subject, but the belief that education is one of the few really transformational pathways in our society. However, to be transformational we need students in school. I know from personal experience that education and a bit of luck took me from a single parent family, living in a council house in Blackpool, a house where there was not enough food for us on some days; to my kids not knowing what it is to ever really be hungry and they are already planning what they might study at university. Education remains the only aspect of society that is universally provided to us all, with the explicit intention of improving all our futures. Education can create huge positive change, from my Mum leaving school at 13, barely able to read and write, to my children leaving me far behind with their vastly superior knowledge and skills. That is the beauty and power of education.

However, COVID and its impacts are hugely detrimental to the education our children are currently receiving and that is why we minimise the number of students going home for each confirmed case, whilst still clearly following the statutory guidance.

I do realise that as parents many of you have very real and genuine concerns about the impact of this disease in terms of health, particularly on older members of families, but I would ask you to reflect on some of the numbers below before asking if your child should or could be included in those children self-isolating:

Guided learning hours for a full GCSE are around 140 hours of directed study. That is, we teach the whole GCSE specification, assess progress and get ready for any controlled assessment or exam in around 140 hours of contact time.

To date and only for the students we have sent home to self-isolate – so this does not include any child who has had to self-isolate for cases identified outside of the school setting, lockdown or any

general absence from school, we have lost with just 11 confirmed cases, 3,521 individual missed days and 17,605 individual lessons (not including pastoral time or taking into account any loss of social time, interaction with friends etc etc) across all students sent home as a close contact. The impact of the lockdowns is something I cannot bring myself to calculate.

We will always send your children home if they are a close contact, but we need them in school otherwise please.

We have recently appointed two academic coach/mentors for September on a two year contract and what is becoming more apparent is that we need to work on emotions, feelings, behaviour and the social impact – in essence, the absence itself from school, before we specifically target gaps in learning. Equally, the most important thing about learning is what is happening in lessons now. We are currently reviewing schemes of learning, assessment and marking policies to try to catch gaps both from primary schools and time with us. We are consciously working to ensure that we do not try to cram everything back into the curriculum; rather we ensure that essential components that students need to build on further on in their education are embedded. This means that each renewed absence from lesson compounds the issues we see for individual students. To that end, we will not redo any of the examinations or assessments we have sat in the last 10 days where students have missed these, to do so would risk sending students' learning further back, just so we can measure that their learning is behind where we would ideally like it to be. So, for instance, no Year 9 students will be taken out of their lessons to complete examinations missed as a result of having to self-isolate for COVID. We may see all of the current restrictions swept away in the next few days, hopefully not to be replaced by onsite testing as this disrupts the whole timetable.

I know that this has been a prolonged period of uncertainty and anxiety, but please trust us to manage the 'in school cases', we have had comparatively few given the size of the school. Each case takes a whole day to manage, but we spend another day dealing with requests to send more children home and this all takes away from the resources we have to offer to the children in our care. Please, please do everything you can to get your children into school every day and I promise you, we will do everything we can to get your children the best possible outcome from their time in education.

I know and I am very grateful that so many of you do put your trust in us to manage this situation. I know and I am very grateful that so many of you helped and supported the school throughout the last 18 months, and before that. I know it hasn't been an easy time for families and that the pandemic has had profound consequences and that these will roll on for years to come, but if we act together as a community, we will be stronger. I am, as ever, incredibly grateful for the support we are given by so many parents, thank you.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kevin Flanagan', written in a cursive style.

Kevin Flanagan
Headteacher