



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

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Dear Parents and Carers

Year 11 current position

I am sure some of you are aware; we have had another confirmed COVID case in Year 11 today. The test was confirmed as positive and I became aware of this just before 12 this morning and I have sent the remaining 52 Year 11 students currently in attendance at school home this afternoon.

I want to start with an apology, as ordinarily either myself or another member of the senior leadership team would call and explain, but given the number of students and the fact that we also have 50% of the senior team away from school as an unfortunate coincidence today, it has not been possible to call everyone individually, I am sorry for that.

I do though want to explain the rationale for my decision today.

Close contacts of students are ordinarily sent home as a precaution and we ask that students are not routinely taken for a COVID test. We ask that families watch for any symptoms within the household and in the event that anyone does become symptomatic, then seek tests. As this is a precaution, we ask only that the student sent home isolates within the family home. As it is a precautionary measure and there is no evidence that they are infected, everyone else in the home continues as normal. Parents carry on going to work, siblings to school etc. etc., please just be mindful of symptoms. Remember the symptoms are:

- High temperature
- New continuous cough
- Loss of sense of smell or taste.

As of today, we have three active cases in the Year 11. That does not mean that they are linked and the differing start dates would suggest that they are not all linked, however, the two cases this week are worryingly close together and I fear that even with action on our part we risk more students testing positive.

It also means that from 142 current Year 11 students, we have:

- Two groups already self-isolating – 66 students
- A further 8 students absent for other COVID related reasons, for example someone in the household has symptoms
- 6 students absent for reasons of general illness
- 52 students in school.

So, in effect we have an absence rate in Year 11 of 61% as of today.

Before today it was becoming difficult to teach some groups effectively as we have some lessons and sets with only one or two remaining students. Today, in response to the new positive case, I need to send a further 26 students home and we would then be left with only 26 Year 11 students in school. The end result of this would be that 106 students were out of school for whom we can only offer limited learning, as teachers are teaching their timetabled school-based lessons to ever diminishing classes.

33 students from the first group to self-isolate are due back at the end of this week, but if everyone returns and we have no further cases in the year group, we will start next week with 50 plus Year 11s on site and nearly twice that number at home.

I have listened to Gavin Williamson and the head of Ofqual Glenys Stacey with some concern over the last two days as they described the summer examination series. It is clear that despite considerable disruption to schools in the North West and North East of England, the generally assumed picture is that it is business as usual and that the vast, vast majority of Year 11 are in lessons. Whereas the reality is that I have students in Year 11 that have been sent home as a close contact twice already this academic year. These students have already missed four weeks of lessons, from the first six weeks of this term and we cannot get genuinely live-lessons based on-line teaching up and running as teachers are teaching the remaining students in school. We need to teach Year 11 for as much time as possible, that much is clear to me if we are to make the progress we need by the summer. At the moment we are in danger of not teaching effectively in school as numbers are so low and being unable to teach 'live lessons' online, this is not helping anyone.

As a result I would like Year 11 to remain at home and isolate as close contacts for the remainder of this half-term. We will start Teams lessons from tomorrow and everyone can access these. This way I am hoping to do two things:

- Break any possible in-school transmission
- Ensure that the maximum number of students can be taught in a meaningful class setting through 'live lessons'.

Some students are due to return from isolation on Friday 15 October 2020. If they are not symptomatic and there is no one in the household that is symptomatic, they can of course return, however, there will be only 33 students in school and we will have to merge sets and groups to allow for Teams teaching to take place. If you would rather they stayed at home and worked via Teams we will code the absence as COVID related and therefore the absence from school will not be recorded in the usual manner and will not show in a student's attendance figures. I do understand if you would rather that they attend and we will of course welcome them back to school. I would ask though that you email returntoschool@psf.wirral.sch.uk to confirm if they will or will not return for the final week of this half-term.

I would though like all of Year 11 back into school on Monday 2 November 2020. Any potential in-school transmission should be well and truly halted and I would hope that we can get Year 11 back into lessons and work all of us together to get everything we can for the students from the GCSEs.

It is maddening the position we find ourselves in and the disregard for the difficulties that thousands of Year 11 students are having around continuity of learning, of teachers and lack of equality and fairness that this is creating is disheartening at the very least. We will, I promise, do everything we can to get our students to the best possible place before summer. We just need a chance to teach them all and a good run of lessons, and we can close some gaps.

Lastly, if there are no options in the home with regard to get students getting on-line, I have found five laptops I can loan, please though only ask as a matter of last resort as I only have five at the moment.

As every your support is invaluable.

Yours sincerely



Kevin Flanagan
Headteacher