



16 November 2020

Dear all,

Since the beginning of the pandemic, I have been committed to regular and transparent communication with you. I am aware that you will have received a number of letters from me, or seen information on our website and social media, but I wanted to write to you today to update you on the current situation at The Portsmouth Academy.

We are continually working with our Trust and the local authorities to ensure we are doing everything we can to keep our school community safe. This includes regularly reviewing our risk assessment and making changes where necessary.

In Portsmouth the rate of Covid-19 infections is rising, and fortunately, until now we have not seen this reflected within our school community. This is because of both our strict safety measures but also because of the continued support from our students and parents, who are looking out for each other and limiting the spread by following the rules in place.

On Friday, we had to send home our first group of students due to Covid-19. This was due to a student in a YR 9 bubble testing positive and their close contacts. Thankfully the student is feeling well and showing only mild symptoms. Very quickly afterwards we then had a similar incident in another YR 9 student. We have now made the decision to close the year group for 14 days to help to minimise transmission.

We have been able to effectively manage these situations by following national guidance and working closely with our Trust and the local authorities. However, I can understand the concerns and questions this can raise so I wanted to clarify some of these processes for you.

Each time a student or staff member within our school community tests positive or shows symptoms they are sent home to self-isolate for 14 days. Our local track & trace procedures (using strict timetables and seating plans), swiftly identifies any students or staff members who have been in 'close contact' and need to self-isolate. This measure dictates whether it is a number of students or a year group that is sent home to isolate.

Close contact is defined by Public Health England as '*within 2m for more than 15 minutes*' – therefore students may come into 'close contact' through sitting near to them in a lesson or at break / lunchtime.

To clarify, if a staff member is deemed to have been in 'close contact' they are also sent home to self-isolate. We then use their teaching timetable to identify any other close contacts that they have had.

We have every confidence in our safety measures and our risk assessments have been checked by the HSE (Health & Safety Executive). To remind you of the safety measures in place during the school day:

- Students are in a year group bubbles meaning they only study, have breaks with and move between classes with their own bubble
- All students are using an enhanced hygiene routines meaning they clean their workspace before and after use; this is complimented by enhanced deep cleans of our school
- All students and staff must wear a face covering in communal areas
- Everyone is expected to social distance on site and remain in their allocated bubbles

Remember – if your child is showing symptoms, do not send them in to school. You must phone the school office to report it.

Finally, whilst students are away from school due to self-isolation, they are expected to continue their studies from home. Our school is fully equipped to switch to a digital learning strategy and will support students in making this change. Students can log onto Microsoft Teams during their allocated lesson times to receive work from their subject teachers. Whilst a student is self-isolating there will be ongoing wellbeing support available. For more helpful guidance on remote learning and using Microsoft Teams, please see [this link](#).

I hope you have found this update useful. Thank you once again for your continued support – we will continue to keep you updated with any developments. If you have any queries please call or email the school office and we will help as best we can.

Yours sincerely,

Rachel Grey



Principal | The Portsmouth Academy | info@theportsmouthacademy.org.uk | 0333 360 2200