

4<sup>th</sup> November 2020

Dear Parent/Carer

### Covid Update

I wanted to share with you an outline of the steps we have taken to manage the risk that Coronavirus presents to us all within the college. The launch of a new National lockdown that is due to commence this week will certainly create a great deal of concern but I want to reassure you that Ely College continues to be as safe an environment as possible so long as a number of expectations are met.

1. It is vital that any student or adult who is experiencing any of the main COVID symptoms (temperature, persistent cough and loss of taste and or smell) does not come into college or visit the reception area. One of the main pillars of social distancing is the need for people displaying symptoms to not leave the house. By following this one measure we can expect the risk of being exposed to the virus to be drastically reduced.
2. We expect all students and staff to wear face coverings within the corridors and as they move from one lesson to the next. The only place or time that students should remove their face covering is when they are in the social eating areas at their break time.
3. We have hand gel stations at key places around the college and have cleaning materials in each classroom. At the end of every day the entire college site is “fogged” with an electrostatic dispenser of anti-viral cleaning chemicals to make sure the classrooms are safe for use for the next day.
4. We deploy a one-year group, per room, per day model – this means we can be confident that room use is kept within year group bubbles for the duration of that day. There are very few exceptions to this rule – such as Year 11 GCSE Drama students using the Bedford Drama studio in preparation for their summer assessments and we have clear procedures in place for the cleaning of this room.
5. We have staggered the break times for year groups so that we can reduce the chance that students will cross bubbles whilst taking their break times.
6. We have put in place a wide range of mitigations that affect the procedures for classroom routines, how work is marked and fed back to students and even how we consult with parents with the use of video software instead of traditional parents’ evenings.

Over the past 8 weeks we have welcomed in inspections from Her Majesties’ Inspectorate (Ofsted), a health and safety audit team contracted to oversee compliance by the trust and a recent inspection from the Health and Safety Executive. We have had very positive feedback from the two health and safety inspections (the Ofsted visit received no feedback as they were asking us what they should look for in other schools) so you can be confident that the systems and routines we have in place are effective *whilst the above 6 points are followed*.

We have rolled back one COVID change and that is regarding the use of PE changing room space. We have altered our risk assessment to accommodate this and have purchased an additional

fogging machines to thoroughly sanitise the changing space after each use. We will review this alteration closely and revert if there is any indication that it threatens the integrity of our risk management. **I also intend to roll back the staggered start to lessons for Year 8 and Year 10 from Monday 9<sup>th</sup> November.** The wide use of face coverings as students come into college means that we can make far more use of this 5 minutes with the prompt start of lessons. So, all lessons will commence at 8:30 from 9<sup>th</sup> November.

I have prepared a PowerPoint presentation which will be shown to students this morning during period 1. This emphasises the following points:

- Face coverings must be worn in the corridors and as they move from lesson to lesson – they can only be removed when they are in communal eating areas or outside during break.
- We intend to keep windows and doors always open during the day – recent modelling data has shown that ventilation is an important means of reducing the viral load. Consequently, we will allow students to wear coats and fingerless gloves during lessons should they feel cold. We will not allow hoodies to be worn – college jumpers and blazers, which all students should be wearing, and a warm coat will suffice.
- It is vital that students socially distance – even though they are in bubbles they are still expected, where possible, to avoid physical contact with each other and take advantage of space outside. Can I please ask for your support in ensuring that your child leaves the college grounds promptly and does not congregate outside college in groups that render distancing useless.

Can I please ask for your support in two specific areas. Firstly, can you please avoid dropping off lunches or kit to students during the day. Our staff are having to handle these materials to pass on to students and it is contact that we can and should avoid. Clearly we do not want students to go hungry so if your child forgets their lunch, please ring their SSA and we will provide temporary overdraft to purchase a hot meal – this will need to be cleared within a timely fashion.

Finally, I know that there are a small number of students and parents who feel that face coverings are not effective and should not be worn. I would ask that face coverings are seen to be a key part of our uniform as the scientific evidence clearly states that wearing a face covering is effective at reducing transmission of viral particles through aerosols and droplets. I will not sanction students for not wearing them, but I want the use of face coverings to become a ‘social norm’ whilst we move through this phase of the pandemic.

I am sorry for the length of this letter, it reflects the huge amount of work that the team has put in place to secure your child’s, and as a result, your, safety. I am always happy to respond to any questions or concerns that you have regarding COVID so please do get in touch should you so wish.

Yours faithfully



Simon Warburton  
Principal