

# WILLOW TREE ACADEMY



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Mr A. Trueman – Chair of Trustees    Mrs J.K. Fearnley – Chief Executive Officer

15th July 2021

Dear Parents/Carers,

I hope you and your family are well and looking forward to the summer break. I would like to take this opportunity to update you on the situation regarding Covid-19, as reported to schools by the Local Authority on Tuesday.

You will have heard that the Delta variant of the virus is highly transmissible and that our neighbours in Barnsley and Doncaster are seeing infection rates soar to twice that of the national average. This means that Rotherham is particularly susceptible; for those within the 18-25 age group and teenagers in secondary school there is particular concern regarding the number of positive cases. We have been asked to urge you to ensure that any young people in your family within this age band take up the opportunity to be vaccinated, as a matter of urgency.

This week we have had positive cases in all our schools. This is very worrying for us so please could you let school know if you have any positive cases in your family throughout the holiday.

On the 19th of July we will know more about the government plans but at the moment our risk assessments and recovery plan remain in place. There is no intention at this time to ease our controls and measures until we are absolutely certain that this will not impact on the health and well-being of our children and staff.

As the summer progresses we will be updated regularly by the Local Authority and should the situation change you will be contacted. We will keep in place the systems that are working well to keep our schools clean and safe, to ensure our children are able to social distance and at the same time enable them to experience the vibrant and exciting curriculum provision that is the Willow Tree way.

We are collecting data on staff vaccination and we will use this to ensure that they can interact more freely. If they are double vaccinated they will be able to cross bubbles. You will receive more information from your school, there are some differences but ultimately our prime focus is to ensure that we mitigate the risk and at the same time provide the best education possible for your children.

In September we are planning for our Y6 residential to happen and also our other educational visits. We sincerely hope that the changing situation does not mean that we have to cancel these again.

We may relax some measures around playtimes in line with government guidelines. Other controls such as reducing visitors to school will remain in place.

As you know we consulted with parents this term regarding the early finish on a Friday. Although school parental response varied slightly, I can share that approximately one third of parents want to keep the early finish, one third don't mind and one third don't agree. Together with the parents that didn't respond we are therefore concluding that the early finish is welcomed by parents. Comments received were that families are enjoying this opportunity to spend time with their children and to extend their weekend, home learning can be completed in this time etc. From a school perspective we have noted the benefits of planning, preparation and assessment being carried out on Friday pm which means that for the 4 1/2 days that your child is in school they have access to first quality teaching by their class teacher, full-time.

It is therefore my intention to put the proposal to the Trust board that we retain the early finish for these reasons.

Where parents are working we are putting together a programme of activities that will be able to be booked in advance for a small weekly charge. We will send out this information in September. Whilst there are some parents who disagreed with the proposal, the consultation was open and fair to all.

I would just like to take this opportunity to wish you a wonderful summer with your families. Please keep safe, please help to keep your homes and our schools Covid-free so that everyone can be happy and healthy and return to school refreshed in the September.

Kind regards

Mrs Jane Fearnley  
CEO/Executive Head Teacher

Mrs Joanne Cook  
Head of School