

October 2021

Dear Parent/Carer

This letter is to inform you of the current situation in Olchfa relating to the pandemic.

As you are aware, the Covid case rate is high locally and this has, as was inevitable, impacted adversely on staffing levels at our school as well as upon pupil absence rates.

Most schools throughout the Local Authority are now in the position where the numbers of pupils testing positive for Covid within the first couple of weeks of the term exceeded or even doubled the number that had done so across the whole of the last academic year. The same is true, in many of our schools, of the teaching and support staff.

It is important that we are open and transparent with you in these unprecedented times. **We are currently having to assess daily whether it is safe to run the school in the normal way.** While we have made and implemented plans to reduce the impact of higher staff absence than normal, the effect of Covid is very considerable at the moment. This is, of course, on top of the usual reasons that might affect staffing levels, most of which cannot be anticipated or planned for, such as sudden bereavement or illness.

We have assessed the current situation and our ability to operate safely as a school and have agreed that we will not be able to run safely if:

- 20% or more of our teaching staff are absent at any one time, and/ or
- A large proportion of the staff who are critical to the safe running of the school are absent (e.g. site staff, fire marshalls, safeguarding staff)

In this event, we will inform you that this critical point has been reached and that it will be necessary to ask one or more year groups to remain at home. Work will be provided for pupils to complete during this period. Pupils who are extensively supported by our additional learning needs team and/or our pastoral guidance team will be contacted individually to arrange continuing support.

We have not yet reached this position in Olchfa and we will inform you if we do. Please be aware that this is not a decision that will be taken lightly. All schools want to be able to run in circumstances as near to normality as possible. Unfortunately, the truth of the matter is that while we are moving towards 'normality' in many ways, the virus is very much still with us and the case rates locally reflect that. Every possible means of avoiding partial closure will be fully explored, however the availability of cover staff is a major issue as all schools are in the same position as our own.

Secondary schools throughout our Local Authority are sending a similar letter to this one, as we are all agreed that it is important for all parents to be informed in advance of contingency planning and to be aware that our collective aim is to ensure the safety of all of the young people that we serve in our schools. Should we reach a point where this cannot be guaranteed, we will therefore implement partial closure (one or more year groups learning remotely) as outlined above and in agreement with the Local Authority. If and when we reach this point, you will receive further information on the dates, arrangements, etc., whether or not your child's year group is one of those affected.

As you will be aware, all of the above is under consideration because the current reality is that many pupils, many of their family members and many of the staff are currently affected by Covid. We wish each of them a swift and full return to good health, and I thank you for your continuing support in these challenging times.

Yours faithfully



Hugh Davies
Headteacher