



Eastlea Covid update 1/11/21



Dear Parents / Carers,

We have had some advice from the county council over the half term break to consider putting additional COVID-19 control measures in schools. This is due to the high case rates in school age children and the wider community in Northumberland. A copy of the letters addressed to Head Teachers as well as parents/carers are on our school website in the Coronavirus section.

We have been fortunate so far at Eastlea and continue to have low numbers of cases here, thanks to the vigilance of parents/staff and the robust risk assessments which are in operation in school. Some of the items suggested by NCC we already have in place – e.g. *asking for pupils to seek a PCR test if a household member has a positive test result even if they have no symptoms and ensuring classrooms are well ventilated at all times etc.*

However, after discussion with staff we do think that based on NCC advice we should put some additional precautionary measures in place – based on their headline suggestions – and these were explained to the children in school today:

1. Face coverings – adults are again recommended to wear masks in communal areas – so for staff this will mean wearing masks in the dining hall. You may also see more staff wearing masks at the gates in the morning/end of the day – we are outside so that is a good safety measure, but staff may still choose to wear masks and if parents/carers wish to do so then again that is your personal choice. There is still NO REQUIREMENT for primary age pupils to wear a face covering.

2. Reduce mixing between year groups and classes – we already have single class year groups which makes this easier to achieve than in larger schools.

- Children have most lessons in their own class bases and the only mixing is outside at breaks and lunchtimes. **While we can, we wish to continue with our system for breaktimes rather than returning to class based zones on the yard** as we feel that this is most beneficial for the pupils in terms of developing their social skills.
- **At lunchtimes**, we will revert to a system of having more **strictly designated tables for each year group** to sit at and increase the staggered entry times into the school hall to reduce possible indoor mixing between class groups.
- **Clubs will continue as planned** – those which are for more than one year group will take place as normal if they are outside. If they are inside, (e.g. KS2 singing club, Grassroots, KS2 Street Dance, Y5/Y6 basketball, KS1 team sports), then the children will be in zones to separate them into 'class bubbles'.

3. Restrict large school events – we will go back to having a whole school assembly via Zoom on Friday mornings and other planned key stage assemblies will now also take place virtually instead of face to face.

4. Limit non-essential visits to school – we had planned to arrange 'Covid secure' face to face parents' evenings for a few classes at a time in the hall in the coming weeks but have taken the decision that these will not now be able to go ahead after all. Instead, class teachers will be contacting all parents/carers during the coming weeks either in writing, by phone or informally 'face to face' outside to discuss how your child has settled in and update you on the things they are working on in school.

We ask that you continue to speak to staff outside or contact them via Tapestry/Seesaw or telephone if there are issues you wish to raise as **only essential meetings will go ahead inside school.**

5. Educational visits – **these can still go ahead with our current strict risk assessments in place** – so the Year 6 class visit to Nissan went ahead as planned today and the Year 5 visit to Washington Wetlands will still take place on Wednesday.

Please continue to be vigilant and if your child shows signs of being unwell, even if it is not with the usual Covid symptoms then consider seeking a PCR test – recent positive cases have involved children with tiredness, sore throats, upset stomachs and headaches (not just the common coughs and fever). We cannot be too careful!

There may be more updates in the coming days/weeks if we are advised to make further changes to our procedures, or the number of Eastlea cases increases. In the meantime, thank you for your continued support and if you have any questions then please do not hesitate to contact me in school.

Miss E Beeston, Head Teacher