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Dear Parents and Carers,

I would like to draw your attention to a couple of current updates about our school life:

**LATERAL FLOW TESTS:** As the federation of two schools we have been able to start weekly lateral flow testing (LFD) in both schools. The LFD provides us with an important extra layer for our protective measures 'tool kit' to keep everybody safe. Through this testing programme we are able to identify an asymptomatic member of staff before they have developed any symptoms. If a person receives a positive result from the LFD test, this result needs to be confirmed with a PCR test. The LFD test is very accurate in identifying a positive case; therefore we start a self-isolating period immediately after a positive LFD result for the students and staff affected. Commencing next week Breakspeare staff will be tested twice per week (Mondays and Thursdays) and Meadow Wood staff will be provided with a lateral home test kit to test themselves twice per week (Tuesdays and Fridays).

**POSITIVE COVID-cases in our schools:** Please trust that we take immediate action after a positive LFD or PCR test result has been notified to us. We inform all relevant parties on the same day and also liaise with the PH local team to verify our actions, safety measures and risk assessment. Please note that it may not be necessary for all staff and students in a particular class to self-isolate after a confirmed case in this class. This is because of the weekly rota system that applies to both staff and some of our students. Not all students and staff of the class have necessarily been in contact with a positive case 48 hours before the onset of symptoms or a LFD test result. So far all positive cases in our schools have been isolated cases and not linked to each other.

**COVID- vaccinations:** Some of our staff have been offered COVID-vaccinations, as they also work in the care sector out of their school working hours. This is great. There is lots of pressure in the media to extend all school staff to be included in the COVID-19 vaccination programme as a priority group. If this should happen, it would help all schools to open for more students and to manage their staffing absences. It is very impressive how quickly the UK has implemented the vaccination programme for vulnerable groups.

**IF YOUR CHILD IS UNWELL:** Please do not send your child to school if he/she is unwell.

**REMOTE LEARNING:** It is important that you agree with your child's class teacher the organisation and content of your child's remote learning. This helps the teacher to provide your child with remote learning activities and resources that are most helpful for you and your child at this challenging time. We are committed to support you and your child whenever we can. Please share with your class teacher any concerns you have about your child's learning and welfare or any other areas where you would need more support.

**LAPTOPS:** We have distributed laptops as requested for some of our students. We are waiting for the delivery of our last order – a few laptops are on their way and will be sent to families as soon as they are ready.

**SCHOOL PROVISION:** Considering the virus transmission rate and our high number of staff absences due to various COVID related reasons, we think that we are currently at the maximum safe number of students in both schools. This is about 50% of the students attending; this is a significantly higher number in our schools than during the spring and summer 2020 lockdown. We will review the current offer at the beginning of February. Please note that we endeavour to offer a placement to as many children as we can safely accommodate in our schools. If you would like to request a placement at school please get in touch with Darren or myself.

**PARACETAMOL:** The decision has been made by the school nurses' managers, not to allow paracetamol to be given in special schools for the students, unless it has been prescribed for the child/young person by a GP. Therefore if you require your child/young person to have paracetamol in school for pain; it does need to be prescribed by a doctor and labelled by the pharmacy along with the medication consent form signed by the parent. The nursing team will then follow this up with a letter from the special school nursing team reiterating this information.

Each child will have a full pain assessment carried out when school staff ask for this and it will be the final decision of the nurse as to whether paracetamol is required.

Due to Covid-19, paracetamol will not be given for temperatures due to the guidance. If the paracetamol is prescribed for pain, it will only be used for that purpose if the nurse assessment signifies this. The nurse will also be required to contact the parent/carer prior to administration, to ask the time of a previous dose. This is to guard against over-dosing.

**CONCERNS AND QUESTIONS:** Please get in touch with us without delay if you have any questions or concerns about any aspects of your child's schooling. It is very important for us that your concerns and questions are responded to as soon as possible.

As always we are committed to help and support your child's learning whether they are at school full or part time or accessing home learning.

Please do not hesitate to get in touch with me regarding any matter in this letter.

Take care. Be safe.

Merja

