

10th December 2020

Dear Parents and Carers,

As we fast approach the start of the Christmas holidays, I am writing to provide you with an update on our end of term arrangements and overall expectations during the school holiday period, in light of COVID-19 and following new guidance released this week by the Department for Education (DfE).

The final day of term, as outlined at the start of the academic year, will be Wednesday 16th December at 12.45 pm. It is incredibly important in these final days of term that we all continue to strictly follow the various safety processes that we have in place in our academy, and also the guidance that we should all adhere to whilst out in the wider community, including, of course, social distancing, hand-washing and close adherence to the regional tier restrictions.

It has been a very challenging time for us all, and I know that everyone is very much looking forward to spending time, whether in person or virtually, with family, friends and loved ones over the Christmas period. I understand there may be some apprehension about the possibility of a need for anyone to have to self-isolate over Christmas. With continuing high rates of positive cases in Essex, it is a possibility that people may find they are alerted through contact tracing that they have had proximity contact with someone who has tested positive for COVID-19 and will therefore need to self-isolate. Today, we have been informed that Essex will be part of a testing system in Secondary Schools. However we have no further details about this yet and I am assuming that they will prioritise the areas of Essex that are having the highest confirmed cases, ie; Basildon, Wickford and Thurrock. As soon as I receive further information I will, of course, share this with you.

None of this is easy, especially at this time of year, but we must all work together as a community to do what is within our power to keep everyone as safe and healthy as possible. We must also all continue to do what we can to ensure our students are able to enjoy their learning in order to mitigate as much as possible the challenges COVID-19 has presented to their education over the course of 2020.

We have a real duty of care to our students, staff and the wider school community, and so we want to make sure that everyone is aware of the protocols we will be following, as advised by the DfE, in the event of receiving a notification of any positive cases that may affect our school community, during the Christmas break.

Between now and the end of term, if an individual in a particular year group bubble tests positive for COVID-19, as soon as we are notified, we will liaise with the appropriate health authorities to determine whether that bubble needs to be closed, and notify those who have been close to that bubble that they must self-isolate. In this situation, students will access remote learning for the remainder of the term. As

you are aware I unfortunately had to close the Year 8 bubble yesterday for this reason.

Between Wednesday 16th December through to Monday 21st December, despite it being the Christmas holiday, we will still need to be informed of any confirmed cases. The DfE advice is “For the first 6 days after teaching ends, if a student or staff member tests positive for coronavirus (COVID-19), having developed symptoms within 48 hours of being in school, the school is asked to assist in identifying close contacts and advising self-isolation, as the individual may have been infectious whilst in school.”

You only need to contact the school if symptoms began or a positive test result was received within 48 hours of your child last being in school. After this time you should use the NHS test and trace service

[.https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/testing-and-tracing/](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/testing-and-tracing/)

In terms of contacting the school can I ask that you contact myself (email below) and Mrs Bennett (Vice Principal). jbennett@ormistonriversacademy.co.uk We will be on call during this time period. Can I kindly ask that you do not contact any other member of staff as the academy breaks up on 16th December, and I genuinely want all staff to enjoy their well deserved break. I, personally, will be travelling on Thursday 17th December for a pre-booked holiday with my family, and would therefore ask that you copy myself and Mrs Bennett into the email if you have a confirmed case on this day, as I will not have any WiFi signal at this time. However, from the 18th December I will have full WiFi access at my intended destination and will be able to respond appropriately after this date.

I would also like to take this opportunity to remind everyone of the measures we can all take to help stop the spread of the virus, in order to help protect our community, and to ensure that we are able to fully reopen the academy, and welcome all of our students back in January:

If your child, a household member or a member of your support bubble develops any of the following symptoms, we ask that you notify the school immediately and arrange a test by visiting <https://www.nhs.uk/ask-for-a-coronavirus-test> or by phoning 111:

- a new continuous cough
- a high temperature
- a loss of, or change in, your normal sense of taste or smell (anosmia)

If your child develops any of these symptoms, they must not come into school and should remain at home for at least 10 days from the date when their symptoms appeared. All other household members who remain well, must stay at home and not leave the house for 14 days from the date when their symptoms appeared. This includes anyone in your “Support Bubble”.

Further information is available at:

[https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-stay-at-home-guidance/stay-at-home-guidance-for-households-with-possible-coronavirus-covid-19-infection.](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-stay-at-home-guidance/stay-at-home-guidance-for-households-with-possible-coronavirus-covid-19-infection)

If your child or anyone in the household does develop symptoms, you can seek further advice from NHS 111 at: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/symptoms/> or by phoning 111.

As a community, we can also help reduce the risk of spreading COVID-19 by:

- washing your hands with soap and water often – do this for at least 20 seconds
- using hand sanitiser gel if soap and water are not available
- washing your hands as soon as you get home
- covering your mouth and nose with a tissue or your sleeve (not your hands) when you cough or sneeze
- putting used tissues in the bin immediately and wash your hands afterwards

It continues to be an incredibly challenging time for everyone, and I am sure that we all have the same hopes for a more positive and “normal” 2021. We appreciate your ongoing support, understanding and cooperation hugely, and it continues to mean a great deal to know that we have your support. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me on ebaker@ormistonriversacademy.co.uk

Please do keep safe and well, and I hope you all find time to enjoy the Christmas season.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "E Baker". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping flourish at the end.

Mrs Emma Baker
Principal