



Garlinge Primary School and Nursery

22 October 2020

Dear Parents and Carers,

Apologies for a further message, but I feel I have no other option than to communicate with our school community once again. Firstly, I would like to thank the huge majority of you who wore their face coverings this afternoon in order to keep everyone safe. Your efforts are much appreciated and I sincerely hope that they continue.

The cases that we have seen at Garlinge, after such a long time without any, are both frustrating and concerning. As a school we have worked very hard to create an environment that has welcomed back approximately 800 pupils and 160 staff since September, with children feeling safe and staff enjoying their company. We pride ourselves on our teamwork and in the 15 years that I have worked at the school, I have never been more proud of examples of this I have seen around the school. We have followed government guidance closely and throughout this week continually liaised with the Department for Education, Public Health England (PHE) and the local authority (Kent County Council). I have been heartened by their response and just this evening a PHE official told me that there was no more we could be doing as a school.

However, I have been made aware of some fairly serious breaches of the rules that have been going on from members of classes that have been instructed by Public Health England to self-isolate as a result of the cases that we have been notified of. These children clearly rely on their parents and carers to allow them to follow the rules and it would seem that some are being let down. Just this afternoon, either members of staff or members of our school community have reported the following:

- 3 pupils who should have been isolating were shopping in Morrison's
- 1 pupil who should have been isolating was shopping at Westwood Cross
- 1 pupil who should have been isolating was at McDonalds

If these reports are true, I am absolutely dumbfounded at the lack of care that a small minority of our community seem to be providing at what is a difficult and stressful time for everyone. We have been living with the pandemic for around 8 months now and we have all had to endure personal hardship, ranging from a loss of freedom and in some families, a tragic loss of life. These are extraordinary times and I would please ask that everyone who has the misfortune to be affected by their child's class closing and a subsequent period of isolation does so to the degree that they have been asked. I have spoken personally at the gate to parents and carers that have collected children during the day and despite the disruption that is caused they have, to a person, been thankful of our efforts and understanding of the conditions. Therefore, if a pupil has been asked to isolate, they need to do so until the day that the period ends. We are a community and if we cannot do what we are asked, however difficult it is, it will only further the spread of the virus and this will continue to affect the school, our families and our local community.

I absolutely realise that the vast majority of my responsibility and authority extends no further than the school gates and is between the hours of 8:30am to 3:30pm, but I would once again plead that the small minority of parents and carers who have been asked to isolate their child does so in the way that the guidance given has laid out.

Yours faithfully

James Williams
Headteacher