

9<sup>th</sup> December 2021

Dear Families,

I am writing to update you regarding COVID-19.

As you will all be very aware with the rise of the new Omicron variant, we will need to not only continue and reinforce the existing contingency measures for the end of term but think very carefully about the new year and any additional measures we may need to put in place.

This term has been the toughest one since the pandemic started. We have had to balance daily staffing challenges to ensure that we continue to provide a quality education and look after the wellbeing of our community. The biggest challenge we face, with increased infections in our community, is staff sickness which means we cannot always provide the daily consistency which we would normally pride ourselves on. The staff at Brookside have been incredible, stepping in to cover, offering flexibility, working above and beyond. I want to take a moment to express my pride in being the head teacher at Brookside. From Nursery to Specialist Provision; Breakfast Club to Afterschool Club; Our kitchen to our Office - the community of Brookside has always risen to every challenge. Children's education and safety have always been front and centre at all times, and I am proud that we have managed both as well as we could have ever been expected to. It has not been easy.

With the end of term, we have another circuit break but the speed with which we see the new Omicron variant increasing means that it is possible that we will have increased infections in January and need to think about how we contain infection across the Academy once again. At the very least we will go into January with the current regulations in place. We are continuing to act as an Amber school and will continue with all the following additional routines:

- That we follow and promote up to date guidance on testing, self-isolation and managing confirmed cases of COVID-19.
- That we continue to work with Test and Trace and Public Health England acting on their advice.
- That we maintain cleaning regimes and continue focused cleaning of high use areas during the day.
- That we keep occupied spaces well ventilated.
- That we use appropriate PPE when dealing with a potential infection outbreak.

On top of this we will also continue to:

- Suspend assemblies until further notice.

- Ensure that lunch times continue to be staggered and year groups are given distinct seating areas.
- Ask that Staff wear face coverings in corridors and communal areas.
- Ask that any close contacts of confirmed cases of COVID-19 identified by NHS Test & Trace book a PCR test and whilst awaiting test results, undertake a daily LFD test and only attend school if this is negative. The daily LFD testing is at the parent or guardian's discretion for primary age children.
- Continue to ask that parents/carers wear face coverings when on the Academy site.

We will then continue to monitor infections within our community over the festive period and if needed add additional safeguards to be in place on our return to the Academy on Tuesday the 4th January 2022. If we need to do this we will write out to you before the new term starts but as I said, whatever happens we will be continue as an Amber school with the existing regulations in place.

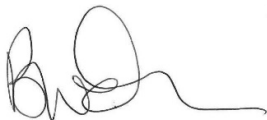
I want to thank each and every one of you for the incredible resolve, endeavor and personal struggles you go through to support our children. You have all thought carefully about family illness and attendance at school in order to keep your wider community safe at this time. Please can we ask that you continue to do this. All our staff have valued this support and it has gone a LONG way in helping us to manage our own challenges. The lovely messages on the Nursery surveys, emails and cards – these are not small things, they are huge to us and really help when we feel, as I know so many of us feel, low, tired or emotional. Thank you.

I hope your Christmas is as special as it can be and when we all wish for a 'Happy New Year' we get what we wish for. That would be the best present.

I'll end on promoting the Academy Rules:

Be Safe, Be Kind and Be Responsible.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Brian Walton', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Brian Walton