

Dear Parents/Carers,

Do you ever have that feeling of regretting saying something one week that pales in comparison the following week! Of course, this instantly disappeared seeing twenty-three year 6 pupils return today, big smiles and looking forward to being back in school. The resilience our pupils have shown and continue to show is quite remarkable, even more so when tuning into sports events with thousands of fans in attendance.

I am not one for using my bulletins to share my political views and opinions. However, I feel compelled to share my decision making from the guidance we are following. As more and more pupils across the country are being forced to isolate, approx 385,000 this week alone, much focus has been on 'bubbles' in the press. For each positive lateral flow test we track and trace using our seating plans in school, only pupils in close proximity (1m and 2m) and for defined amounts of time (1mins to 15mins) are asked to isolate. We define bubbles at EMS as Year Groups. This allows groups that are 'set' to come together and receive the education they deserve. This would include DT, English, Maths and any intervention groups. At all times we follow the advice given to us from Public Health Dorset. The advice is provided on a case by case scenario which also protects against sweeping decisions that can have huge consequences for pupils' and families' emotional and economical circumstances.

Another protective measure bubble groups provide is keeping cases confined to one year group. This played out this week. If we had no social distancing or bubble groups I believe the impact would have been felt across all year groups. We will continue with regular hand sanitising, social distancing where possible and reducing contact across classes through seating plans and staff moving to lessons to teach.

Although I do not have a crystal ball, the next focus will inevitably be around testing. I would not be surprised to hear plans for daily testing in some form, particularly if identified as a close contact. I am concerned any plans for schools will not be shared in adequate time and provide the right support or resourcing, but I have to remain focused on living for today.

The office team and support staff have been simply incredible this week. The workload is quite scary and the other jobs do not go away, but they have all knuckled down even further and gotten on with it. I am proud and grateful for the wonderful job all my team do in challenging circumstances, for the past 18 months. Everything we do, rightly, has the pupils at the centre of decisions made. They need to be in school and taught well.

Thank you for continuing with testing at home. If anyone in your household develops symptoms, please book a PCR test. Lateral Flow Tests are for detecting asymptomatic infection. This is for people who feel perfectly fine. Any symptoms, and this list can change, please book a walk-in (drive-in) PCR test.

Finally, thank you for remaining patient and supportive where this has affected you and your family. We completely acknowledge the knock-on effect isolation has for families. As always, we are here to support you. Home Learning provided 'live' where possible (no internet issues anymore!!) and staff checking in regularly. I will also take this opportunity to direct you to the school website for our home learning policy for guidance, tips and expectations for those working from home.

Fingers crossed for Saturday evening. However, there is also tennis, cricket and cycling to name other sports, where there are great events taking place.

Have a great weekend,

Mr Christopher

P.S. The PTFA Monthly Draw has taken place and winning number is 139.