



30<sup>th</sup> November 2021

Grant Road Crowthorne

Berkshire RG45 7HZ

Tel: 01344 772658

Fax: 01344 776623

E: [secretary@edgbarrowschool.co.uk](mailto:secretary@edgbarrowschool.co.uk)

Dear Parents/Carers

As we approach the end of term we have lots to update you on and some urgent action that requires your support. I'm afraid that there has been a flurry of new guidance from the Department for Education which inevitably means this update is once again focussed on coronavirus.

### Current Situation

Edgbarrow school has 17 active COVID-19 cases representing 1.1% of the student population (as of 9am 30<sup>th</sup> November). There are cases in Year 7, 8, 9, 11 and 12 and we do not meet outbreak criteria in any year group. We are however tracking the number of cases in Year 7 where there are 10 positive cases.

Perhaps more significantly we are experiencing huge difficulties with staffing. We have a number of cases in staff, this is exacerbated by extended absence resulting from cases within a family with young children or bubbles in primary schools being closed making childcare complicated. Like most work places, it is also the time of year for seasonal colds etc. This is leading to more cover lessons than normal and further pressure on staff who are already flat out. I am grateful for your patience and understanding as we negotiate this difficult period.

### Face masks

Thank you for your prompt support and sending students with face coverings yesterday. With immediate effect, the latest guidance asks for students to wear coverings in indoor communal areas. We have interpreted this as corridors and the main hall where the number of potential close contacts increase beyond students' normal groups. Students are of course encouraged and supported to wear masks at any time.

### Onsite Testing – January

On Friday we were asked to re-establish the Asymptomatic Test Site (ATS) to complete one round of onsite testing when the students return in January. We have not yet completed the logistics of how this will work, but parents, carers and students should expect some disruption and phased return across the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> January. The guidance has also asked for us to renew consent. Later this week we'll issue instructions on how to do this. **Organising testing is a huge logistical undertaking and it is a massive help to us if parents could watch out for the instructions and complete the process by 13<sup>th</sup> December.** With limited staffing in our main office, I am keen to reduce the amount of chasing to a bare minimum and your help is much appreciated.

We will release a timetable for January as soon as it is available.

## **Contingency plans for summer exams**

All schools have been asked to develop contingency plans for the collection of evidence to support teacher assessed grades in the unlikely event that summer exams are unable to proceed. Again, this is a complicated task as we try to balance the need for evidence alongside the pressure and time required for both students and staff to complete work. We are writing separately to the year groups affected with outline plans; further details will follow in the new year and tutors will go through the plans with the students.

That's quite enough of Covid, other school matters:

## **Student surveys**

Each year we run a programme of surveys to better understand student views of the school and to make appropriate adjustments on the basis of feedback. Whilst the students are always positive, this terms survey looked at learning, safety and the environment. The vast majority feel well prepared for assessments, go back over their learning, feel safe onsite and going to and from school. There were some excellent points made about having a clearer understanding of how to access support and the role of the student support department; that more cameras supported safety; that PSHE could include more about how to look after your own mental health and 100% of students felt that being more environmentally friendly is important for the school. We'll pick up on all of these points by the end of next term.

You have also been very kind with your annual/monthly contributions to the school fund. We have a list of priorities that we will share with the school council to help us to decide where to spend resources to have the most impact on the students. The annual reminder for school fund will come out in January! <https://www.justgiving.com/edgbarrowschool>

## **School Show – We will Rock You**

The cast and crew have been working incredibly hard to be able to hold our first live production for 2 years. There's a huge cast with students from Year 7 right through to Year 13, it's a great opportunity to come together as a school and enjoy a fun and lively show. Tickets are on sale now. If you are coming in person, we have had to limit seat numbers, ask that you wear a mask for the performance, take a lateral flow test prior to arrival and do not attend if you have any Covid symptoms. For those not able to come in person, we are selling tickets for a live stream that you can watch at home. It should be a show to remember!

## **Uniform review**

The government guidance has now been published and we'll be in touch in the new year to consult on any proposed changes. The broad thrust will be to look to reduce branded items over the next few years. Whilst we are not planning any significant changes, we are also keen to have parents' views on the wearing of a tie for all students (or not) as we look towards fuller compliance with equality requirements. More to come after Christmas.

## **First aid**

We are seeing an increased number of visits to the first aid room; some days we are receiving over 30 visits before first break. In many cases students tell us they've been advised by parents/carers to see the school nurse regarding an ailment they've picked up or because they can't get to an appointment at their surgery. As a school we do not actually have a qualified nurse, we have a trained lead first aider to support emergencies. We are also currently unable to recruit to this post, which becomes vacant before Christmas, this means duties will fall on other first aiders across the school. We absolutely want students to feel well looked after and to access the first aid room appropriately, but

we would ask for your support in sensible use of the facility. We would also be grateful if you can share job adverts as they appear on social media.

### **Umbrella club**

We are delighted to have launched a student led group to celebrate diversity across the school. The Umbrella Club is for students who are part of, or wish to support, the LGBT+ community. Any student is welcome, with the club taking place each Wednesday in the learning room.

### **Site improvements**

The fencing is nearly complete and the gates will be operation before Christmas; this is a significant upgrade to site security and safety. This is a polite reminder that unless you hold a permit, cars should not be collecting or dropping off in the school car park; from January the gates will be closed to those trying to enter the site between 3 to 3.30pm. We encourage students to walk or cycle and, where necessary, be dropped off away from the entrance – this is a safety request as we support 1500+ students on foot and bike to safely access the site.

### **Christmas!**

The Christmas holidays are not far away. We are looking forward to Christmas lunch on the 14<sup>th</sup> /15<sup>th</sup> December, details to follow. For those using Cucina and not having the Christmas lunch, there will be a smaller selection of alternatives available than normal. The last day of term will be a non-uniform, Christmas Jumper day. School will close at 12.05 on the 17<sup>th</sup> December. Whilst I am sure you will have to endure another letter from me prior to the break, can I take this opportunity to thank you for your support and patience this year and to wish you all a very Happy Christmas!

Yours faithfully



**Mr S Matthews**  
**Headteacher**