8/7/21

Dear Parents and Carers

Following announcements made yesterday and advice sent to school by the Government I am writing to you to let you know the possible implications for Croft in September. The full document can be found here:-

[Step 4 update - what parents and carers need to know about early years providers, schools and colleges - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/what-parents-and-carers-need-to-know-about-early-years-providers-schools-and-colleges-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-outbreak/step-4-update-what-parents-and-carers-need-to-know-about-early-years-providers-schools-and-colleges)

**1.Schools will no longer be required to carry out contract tracing**.

This means that from September we will no longer be contacting you to ask your child to self-isolate if they have been in contact with someone in school who has tested positive. It is still possible your child could be contacted by NHS Track and Trace.

**2.Pupils close contacts will not be required to self-isolate next term from September.**

From 16th August, even if contacted by Test and Trace pupils who are identified as close contacts will not be required to self-isolate but they will be encouraged to carry out a PCR test. Given that you will be identified by Track and Trace, it is unclear how close contacts will be identified. Hopefully, further guidance should hopefully be issued closer to September.

With over 7 weeks before the start of term, it is impossible to predict how many more positive cases there will be across the country and in County Durham and the Government has now issued guidance for September which we will be incorporating into our risk assessment which will shortly be available on the school website. Part of this advice is to have contingency plans in place, similar to those that are currently in place, bubbles, face masks etc. Should be need to we are confident we can put these measures back in place if instructed to do so by the Government.

Following a year of these measures we have decided to keep some of them in place and also revert back to some of the previous procedures that were in place in school. So, from September:

* Pupils will continue to eat lunch in the dining hall in their year groups and will have their own zones for break and lunch-time. We will also be introducing PESSPA( Physical Education, School Sport and Physical Activity (PESSPA) in the different zones so pupils will have a range of sporting and social activities to choose from.
* Primary pupils will continue to eat lunch in their classrooms and will also be able to access PESSPA in their own playgrounds. By September we are hoping to have access to the field outside of the Primary area that Primary pupils will be able to access.
* We will be testing secondary pupils onsite on the first day back (Thursday 2nd September) and then again on the 6th September). If you do not want your child to be tested please inform school.
* We are asking all Secondary pupils to continue testing twice weekly at home until the end of September when the Government will be reviewing this approach.
* A continued emphasis on hygiene, - pupils will be required to wash their hands at the end of every lesson, and wipe down their work area before they move to their next lesson.
* Pupils in Secondary school will be returning to the Secondary model where they will transition to their next lesson in subject specific classrooms. They will continue to carry around their own equipment in their pencil case which will be provided by school. If pupils wish to bring in their own pencil case that can be wiped down at home every day that is also acceptable.
* Continued ventilation of classrooms – windows and doors to be open at all times, we will continue to review this and update the risk assessment accordingly taking into account weather during the Autumn terms.
* A tolerance for those pupils and staff who wish to wear face coverings voluntarily, this will include communal areas and within the classrooms. This is individual choice and will form part of the risk assessment.

**Other information**

* We are hoping to have the yard outside the sports hall modernised with new flooring and a set of outside exercise equipment as a separate yard for pupils to use.
* The Early Years area of the school is set to be renovated with new outside equipment, murals, sensory play, a stage, and hopefully we will have an area of the field to use for all of our Primary pupils with a new OPAL area being created.
* At the top of the school we have purchased a new Portacabin which is going to be used for our vocational education- motor vehicles, small animal care, bricklaying and plumbing.
* In the Forest school are work has begun on developing the land based studies areas for both Primary and Secondary pupils to access.
* All Secondary timetables have been completed so staff will share these with you before the end of term and they will be available on the school website for 2021-2022.
* All pupils have been informed of who their staff are next year.
* We intend to continue to raise standards in school, one of which is uniform and PE kit. Pupils are to come into school in their uniform and change into PE kit and then change back into uniform if they have PE, OE or other sporting activities. We are very aware that for some of our pupils getting changed for PE can cause them some anxiety so if this is the case for your child we can make exceptions to this, all we ask is that you let us know so all staff can be informed. We are also very aware of the sensory issues for some of our pupils and again, we fully understand this, if there is an issue with school uniform could you inform school please. Please read the accompanying letter about school uniform and PE kit.
* Emphasis on ‘Sir’ ‘Miss’. From September we will again be addressing this and we, and hopefully, you, will support us with this. I would like pupils to no longer use staff first names, but address staff by their second name, i.e. Mr Davis. There will **NOT** be any sanction if they do but we will be encouraging pupils at all time to address staff appropriately.

I fully understand how anxious you must be about the next two weeks and potential disruption to holiday plans and the impact this could have on your family. We have obviously had some recent cases and I am sure it has added to your worries as it has to mine but we must try to keep the school open and have as many pupils attending at all times. We have lots of exciting activities for the pupils to participate in during the last week and we are hoping we can end what has been a very difficult year on a hugely positive note.

Lastly, I would like to say a huge thank you to you as parents and carers for the tremendous support, patience, tolerance and understanding you have given our school over the past year. The staff have worked incredibly hard in unbelievably difficult circumstances and I would like to publically thank them as well for all of their amazing work. The relationships between staff and parents is remarkable and I know all school staff are very appreciative of the kind words and messages that they receive.

Hopefully 2021-22 will be a bit easier!

As ever, if you have any questions or queries about any of the information in this letter please don’t hesitate to get in touch with school.

Lee Davis

Head of School.