

WOOTTON ACADEMY TRUST

Sunday 10 January 20201

Dear Parents/Carers

Every day, there is more news of the alarming increase in Covid 19 cases, the number of people in hospital with Covid -19 and tragically the number of people dying each day.

Even though we are in another national lockdown, the R rate is still above 1.0 – somewhere between 1.1 and 1.3. The new variant is more transmissible, which means more people are getting the virus. There is speculation of the lockdown rules being made stricter in an attempt to stop the virus becoming even more widespread. Some news reports claim that people are NOT following the rules. It is vital that all of us do so. Government is urging everyone to *stay at home, protect the NHS and save lives* and England's Chief Medical Officer, Professor Chris Whitty is telling everybody to "*act like you've got it*". Good advice indeed.

In London, the Mayor, Sadiq Khan, has declared a major incident because the virus is *at risk of running out of control*. When you have read more of this letter, you may be surprised just how high the number of cases are in our locality compared to London. I was genuinely shocked.

More than 80,000 people have died from this virus in the UK; unless everyone complies with the strict rules, of staying at home except in those situations where it is allowed, the NHS will be overrun and sadly, even more people will die.

Bedford Borough has one of the highest number of cases in the east of England with 1,011 cases per 100,000 of the population. This is almost double the UK average. Three weeks ago, it was 263 per 100,000. The figure for Central Bedfordshire is 679 cases per 100,000, still above the UK average.

You may have looked at the Public Health England data for our villages and other places; if so, **you will be aware that the number of cases is higher in Wootton and Stewartby and in Bedford than MANY London Boroughs and virtually every town and city.**

Where	Covid 19 Cases per 100,000
UK	576
Bedfordshire	779
Bedford Borough	1011
Central Bedfordshire	679
Luton	942
Milton Keynes	1005
Wootton/Kimberley catchment towns & villages	
Wootton and Stewartby	1193
Bedford [MK40 Post Code]	1181
Kempston [MK42 Post Code]	959
Marston Moretaine, Lidlington and Woburn	770
Houghton Conquest and Clophill	517
Cranfield	516

Where	Covid 19 Cases per 100,000
<i>London Boroughs</i>	
Barking and Dagenham	1678
Redbridge	1559
Haringey	1092
Southwark	1042
Barnet	1035
Hammersmith and Fulham	973
Lambeth	971
Islington	859
Hackney and City of London	813
<i>UK Towns and Cities</i>	
Slough	1173
Liverpool	859
St Albans	764
Blackburn with Darwen	745
Birmingham	739
Oxford	605
Cambridge	584
Peterborough	520
Bristol	468
Nottingham	451
Manchester	422
Oldham	371
Cornwall	367
Leeds	354
Glasgow	341
Sheffield	290
Newcastle Upon Tyne	281
Edinburgh	238

Figures as of January 9 2021 PHE Data

What is the current situation with confirmed cases at Wootton Upper School and Kimberley College?

During the fifteen weeks of the Autumn Term there was only one confirmed Covid 19 case at Wootton Upper School– in week 13. At Kimberley College there were six cases. This was fewer cases than most other educational settings. **Since the arrival of the new variant there have been many more cases.** [see the table below].

Over the Christmas Holiday, parents/carers/staff told us about new positive Covid-19 cases impacting on members of our community - and continue to do. Thank you. **Further guidance issued on Thursday 7 January asks schools/colleges to request that parents/carers continue to inform us of all positive cases of pupils and students when tests are taken outside of school/college.** Please continue to do this using Covid19@wootton.beds.sch.uk

Over the last three-week period there have been a **further 30 cases in our community, reported to us.** Given that one in three individuals with the virus is asymptomatic the true number is likely to be even higher.

Therefore, if the Mayor of London is so concerned by the data in London to declare a serious incident, I feel compelled to bring to your attention the serious situation in the villages which serve our school and college communities.

What is the current situations with confirmed cases in our villages?

Total Number of Positive Covid-19 Tests						
	2-Dec	9-Dec	16-Dec	23-Dec	30-Dec	07-Jan
Cranfield, Marston, Lidlington			19	56	122	109
Houghton & Haynes			8	17	16	24
Stewartby + Elstow	11	4	11	31	37	56
Wootton	6	7	4	30	42	59
Wilstead + Wixams	11	0	13	29	25	36
Bedford Borough	171	229	457	829	1127	1556
Central Beds		350	802	1224	1483	1806
Milton Keynes				1924	2180	2557
Luton				1098	1179	1682

The table above clearly shows the increase in cases in some of our catchment villages and nearby local authorities.

As well as government, Professor Chris Whitty and Sadiq Khan all stressing how essential it is for all of us to stay at home, to protect the NHS and to save lives, locally, the interim Director Children’s Services and the Director of Public Health wrote to parents/carers last Thursday asking them to keep their children at home wherever possible.

Bedford Borough Council letter asking you to keep your children at home.

Last Thursday evening, we emailed the letter to all parents/carers from **Vicky Head**, Director of Public Health and **Martin Purbeck**, Interim Director of Children’s Services at Bedford Borough Council. The letter asked you to keep your children at home unless there was no alternative and gave guidance on when children can remain at home. In general, children **under the age of twelve**, are unlikely to have the maturity to be able to remain at home all-day and children **under the age of sixteen** should not be left at home alone overnight.

What does this mean for Wootton Upper School pupils and Kimberley College students?

Where it is essential for your children to come into school or college, we will do our best to accommodate them in our on-site provision. **We will prioritise vulnerable children.**

Given the serious local situation which I have tried to outline in this letter, we will consider requests on an individual basis from critical workers for their children to come into school/college, but we will ask you to explain why it is essential and we will require you to provide us with supporting information from your employer – shift pattern etc. -before we make a decision on any requests. We will take into consideration the age of your child too. The further guidance issues on January 7 stated *“Parents and carers who are critical workers should keep their children at home if they can.”*

What are we doing to mitigate risk of people catching the virus if they have to come into school/college?

From Monday 11 January, **where it is essential for staff, children and young people to be in the school or college**, we will require everybody to have a face covering on at all times, including on lessons and at social times, unless they have a medical exemption.

We shall provide face visors for use in school and at the college to those pupils and students who need to be attend the on-site provision. **Pupils and students who prefer to wear face coverings may do so.**

They may also switch between a face covering and visor so long as they sanitise fully before and after doing so. If you have a child in our on-site provision and have any questions about this please email Mrs McMorn using cmcmorn@wootton.beds.sch.uk

In line with government guidance, we encourage everyone who has to come to school/college to avoid public transport and to avoid using school transport wherever possible. If there is no alternative, please reinforce the requirement that your children must wear a face covering.

Last week, we revisited Health and Safety Training with our staff to remind them of our procedures and expectations. Additionally, our Health and Safety Competent Person reviewed and approved our risk assessment to start Lateral Flow Device tests at Wootton Upper School and Kimberley College. We are in position to test pupils/students attending on-site provision.

We have trained enough staff to carry out Lateral Flow Device tests once per week on staff and to offer two tests, three to five days apart to those pupils and students who have to be in school or college and who wish to access this service. We will also start to offer weekly tests to staff.

We hope that this will identify anybody who is in school or the college who may have the virus.

Pupils and students in our provision wishing to access this service are being tested on Monday 11 January and Thursday 14 January.

Mass testing of pupils and students studying remotely at home will not start until lockdown is over. When this date is known we will contact the army of volunteers who contacted the Trust to offer their support.

We are urging people to follow the rules by staying at home to protect themselves, their families the NHS and everybody else and in doing so to save lives.

Many of us believe that there is light at the end of the tunnel. How long it will be before we can return to a more normal existence, none of us know. I suspect that it will be longer than any of us hope. Nonetheless, vaccinating the population in the months ahead will make a real difference. This weekend, Bedford Borough Council has issued a statement announcing that the first vaccinations have taken place in Bedford for people over 80.

Stay at home, protect the NHS and save lives.

Yours sincerely



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Wootton Academy Trust

Wootton Academy Trust operates:
Wootton Upper School & Arts College
Kimberley 16-19 STEM College
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