

Orchard School Bristol

Filton Road, Horfield, Bristol, BS7 0XZ

T. 0117 377 2000

E. info@orchard.tila.school

www.osb.school



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Headteacher: Mrs Julia Hinchliffe **MA (Hons), MA, NPQH**

04 November 2020

Dear parents and carers

Welcome back to Term 2! We are really pleased to be back in school, and it has been lovely to catch up with the children again after the half term.

I hope you are well and are managing through this difficult time. I am writing to let you know how we are managing as a school, particularly in light of the national lockdown starting on Thursday 5th November.

As you know, we are strictly following hygiene and distancing measures. Students in each year group:

- have staggered start and end times to school
- go to break/lunch in a different hall at different times
- use different outside play areas at different times
- sanitise their hands on entry to their year group village/classroom
- stay in their 'village' for all key lessons, only moving out of these rooms under the guidance of specific members of staff, for example when accessing counselling, a specialist room such as the Cookery Room or use of the Science Laboratory
- keep distance from staff/other year groups through avoiding taped out areas and following signs/instructions from staff
- clean down equipment after use, e.g. the laptops
- wear masks along the corridors, and some students are now choosing to wear masks in the classroom as well

So far, these measures have served us really well, and we have been able to keep all year groups in school.

Unfortunately, given the rise in cases across Bristol, it would be unrealistic to think we would never have a positive case among our school community. We are asking parents to inform us of any positive student case by emailing sbm@orchard.tila.school

I want to reassure you that we will always be in touch with Public Health England and the Local Authority in the event of any positive case affecting your children. Public Health are now very experienced in managing cases across schools and will inform us who needs to isolate at home, and who can come into school.

This term already we are experiencing high absence rates, particularly from staff. Some staff are having to self-isolate following testing and tracing instructions. This



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means that the school is managing with more supply teachers and with staff offering to take on extra duties. This situation is manageable at present, but I am aware that if many more staff are absent, we could be in a position where we cannot open the school to all year groups safely.

We are doing all we can at present to keep the school open as usual, and we want to continue in this way. We know how important education is to our young people. However, if we have to close to a year group, due to Covid-related absence, we will endeavour to inform you as soon as possible by text, so you can make arrangements. If the decision is made early in the morning, which may be the case, we aim to text you before 8am on the day.

If your child has to be at home due to a year group's Covid-related absence, then we have a remote learning plan in place. All students in the year group log on to a laptop/computer at home at 8.40am for a registration session, and all their work for the day is on Microsoft Teams virtual classrooms. Students were trained in how to find and submit work through Microsoft during Term 1, so should be confident in accessing their home learning. Your child will have the same timetable as their usual school timetable during any remote learning, but will complete the work at home. I know our pastoral team have worked with students/parents/carers to identify who may need to borrow a laptop from school for remote learning, and the school will support in allocating these.

Finally, can I please remind all parents and carers that the school staff are available to support you too. If you are particularly worried or anxious or feel that you are not coping well during this new lockdown, please get in touch. Your wellbeing affects your child's wellbeing, so please talk to your child's pastoral manager. We will always try our hardest to get back to any messages promptly.

With this letter I am sending a letter from our Chief Executive, Mark Davies. Both Mark and I send our warmest wishes and thank you for all the support you have shown the school throughout this Covid period.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J Hinchliffe', written in a cursive style.

Julia Hinchliffe, Headteacher