



**St Osmund's**  
**CE Middle School**

15.10.20

Dear Parents and Carers,

As we go into half term, we are all looking forward to some relaxation with family, I am sure. I wanted to take this chance to update you with our operation at this time and am also sending an updated plan to you with this letter. Please have a look. During this half term, things like wearing masks on the school buses have become a requirement (unless you are exempt) and we are asking students and staff to wear masks in communal areas inside if possible too. We are not using internal communal areas in the main so it is use of the toilets and handwashing facilities to consider here. We are travelling around the building externally as transmission rate of the virus outside is significantly lessened. We are wanting to continue with coming to school in PE kit twice a week as it helps us greatly to avoid cramped changing rooms. Please could adults wear masks on drop off and pick up if you are standing waiting.

As a school community, one of the positives to come out of this situation is a pulling together. Families have, of course, felt anxious – and so have staff. One of the things we can really do to help each other is to treat half term as a 'circuit breaker': Public Health have asked us to communicate that we should all think about our behaviour and contact over the fortnight so that we come back to school having broken the infection circuit. Students who were asked to self-isolate during this term are not returning until 2<sup>nd</sup> November, just to be sure.

Sadly, we have decided not to run any homework clubs, intervention groups or after school clubs until further notice. Aside from the 'Out of Hours' which can run in a large ventilated space with the same staffing, nothing else will run after school. This is because those members of staff who offer all the other provision are exposed to additional students by doing so and we consider this unnecessary exposure. We will still run our Early Birds and Breakfast Club every morning because we can do this without exposing additional staff. Public Health advise that child to adult transmission is the most likely scenario; certainly our cases in school would suggest this.

All through the winter, Public Health have asked us to continue with all classroom windows open. Whilst the heating is on now, it is still getting cool. Students will need to wear layers under uniform please – a long sleeved white top under a shirt works wonders. When it gets really cold, like all other schools nationally we will allow students to wear coats in classrooms. We are under the direction of health care professionals at all times here. So too will we continue with sanitising hands on entry to every classroom, handwashing during the day and cleaning tables and door handles through the day too. It is helpful if your child has their own sanitiser as this speeds up getting the lesson going, especially if they object to the smell of the school-provided version!

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**Leadership Team:**  
Mr P Absolom MA  
Mr S Beet BA  
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The Department for Education require us to run in year group bubbles; we cannot be compared to a small first or primary school running in class bubbles. Smaller children cannot sit still and this means a whole class bubble goes home with a positive test. In our school, we are able to identify 'close contacts' with seating plans used across the school and prevent a whole class needing to go home. The DfE have instructed us to use formal, forward-facing rows only to aid this. I think some parents have found this difficult to understand so I hope this is now clear to you; this is not our in-school decision but one made by Public Health and the DfE. Teachers are teaching from the front at the greatest distance possible in order to stay more than 2m away from most students (we are limited by our room sizes of course). Teaching assistants are less able to do this with the students that receive support but are still attempting to have 'close contact' with as few students as possible. Public Health give us the definition of 'close contact' as less than 2m for fifteen minutes or more, or less than 1m for one minute or more. After the outbreak in school last week, Public Health and Dorset Council have scrutinised every aspect of our operation and risk assessment with us. The one change they asked for was to reduce Teaching Assistant exposure to multiple children so we have to let some children go without the additional in-lesson support that they would normally have (parents/carers affected have been made aware and we have picked those most able to be independent). Public Health did not require us to close for a deep clean and we had already taken certain rooms out of use for 72 hours before a clean, as advised.

I seem to have done nothing this half term but thank you for all your support but I need to do it again. I have not seen anything like these times in my twenty five years in schools. I used to really worry about calling a 'snow day' and that seems like a tiny thing now! It has become a cliché but these are unprecedented times and we can only work through this together. It is new to us all. We will need to reflect and change things; I think we can all see this is not going away quickly. We all need to remain flexible and understanding. We are continuing with our staggered timings which work well and we have committed to changing only the things that Public Health advise us to, so that we are not increasing the level of difficulty for you at home. For the sake of our young people, let's continue to model good communication, working through problems together and immense positivity. These last six months of childhood have not been so much fun for them and we must find fun along the way. We are trying so hard in school to prioritise our young people's mental health and joy of learning alongside infection prevention and control. All of us on Team Ossie's understand parental anxiety in this situation and indeed, as a mother, I have never known a stress quite like it. The virus makes us feel powerless about the people we love the most. Please do contact your child's tutor with any queries or support needs. If you would like to come and walk around the school (outside) with me and see how we are running, please email the office and we can schedule that. If you are feeling anxious, I would recommend it as very reassuring. Please know that my entire staff team do our very best in service to your children every day.

Have a lovely half term together and we look forward to seeing everyone again on Monday 2<sup>nd</sup> November.

Yours sincerely,



Mrs S Sawtell

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