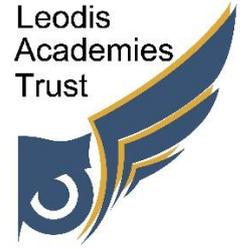




## Westerton Primary Academy

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Leodis  
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6<sup>th</sup> November 2020

Dear Parents, Carers and Colleagues

### Covid 19 update

Our return to school following the half term break has been nothing if not eventful! As the second national lockdown begins, please know that we are and will still be doing everything we can to keep going to provide education and child care for our children. However, this means trying to mitigate additional challenges which are worth sharing with everyone.

New guidelines must now be followed which determine that **Clinically Extremely Vulnerable colleagues** who need to shield at this time, must either **work from home if their role permits this or stay at home** if it does not. Given the number of colleagues employed by the academy, this will inevitably impact on our ability to cover absence when it occurs.

We have very much enjoyed welcoming Nursery, Reception and Year 1 back to school from Monday, 2<sup>nd</sup> November and we were very hopeful for a more settled half term. However, we must accept it will not be without challenges and inconvenience. For an academy our size with over 700 pupils on roll, the current premises which opened in 1988 really were not planned and built in with a pandemic in mind. Due to the severe physical congestion in school, **shared toilet facilities and cloakrooms** are still an issue for **every** year group, this added to the staffing challenges we faced as we approached the half term break. We had a total of 35 staff absent with Covid related issues, being either positive themselves, or having to self-isolate due to a family member.

Unfortunately, a minority of colleagues and children were still unable to return on Monday this week. Further positive cases have resulted in the closure of a class in Year Five and a class in Year Four. Supply staff have been booked for missing teachers where possible but it is much more difficult to cover LSAs (Learning Support Assistants) which makes **interventions and supervision ratios much more difficult in compliance with legal requirements.**

As positive cases continue to come in, and we fear they will as the government restrictions would seem to suggest Covid 19 is increasingly prevalent, we will continue to consider each case carefully in accordance with the guidelines set out by Leeds City Council, Public Health England and the DFE. All recognise that the youngest primary children (Nursery, Reception, Year One and Year Two) are unable to socially distance and the likelihood is that whole classes/year groups may need to be sent home. We will still try to avoid this wherever possible but there can be no guarantee that it will not be necessary again, such are the difficulties in which education colleagues are expected and willing to continue working.

For our **older primary children** (Year Three to Year Six) we are required to have **class seating plans** with children seated in rows (although the classrooms of course are still no larger than previously). However, this means only certain children who have been in '**close or proximity contact,**' as defined by Public

Health England, with a positive case have to self-isolate for 14 days. Again, depending on contact and dates, it could still be whole classes or even year groups who have to self-isolate, whichever Health and Safety, the DFE or Public Health England deems to be safest and appropriate. Every case is discussed in detail and the most appropriate measures taken given the extensive guidance being negotiated daily. It is extremely challenging and I would like to thank our extraordinary Senior Leadership Team and all colleagues for the incessant work being put into this.

We are duty bound to follow the advice if and when a positive case is confirmed, even if this advice may seem inconsistent for different ages or be in opposition to individual views. We understand and share **parental anxieties with regard to children not being in school** and we would much rather that they were. We also understand the **opposing concerns expressed that whole year groups and, indeed the whole school, should be closed**. We will continue to try our best to address them all with our repeated explanations and we do thank you for your understanding with this. When there has been a positive case confirmed on the premises, the **classrooms impacted must be empty for 72 hours prior to a deep clean** by Leeds City Council. These are the regulations which LCC stipulate and by which we must abide. This may be deemed as reassuring as it is frustrating, depending on personal views, needs and circumstances. Please do support us by **keeping children at home if there is a positive case in your household and keeping us informed as soon as you become aware of a positive case**.

In trying to meet the educational and emotional needs of our children, the remote learning we now provide for those who are self-isolating, has evolved since the previous lockdown and closely mirrors the learning that would have been happening in the classroom, thus children do not miss out on any of the curriculum for their year group. We are again following guidelines to use learning platforms like Tapestry and Seesaw to deliver this. The same lesson content is uploaded to the learning platforms. The other benefit of the learning platforms is that they allow the teacher to see the work of a child immediately, so support can be provided and the learning for the next day tweaked if necessary to deal with common mistakes; whole class feedback can also be given.

A parental concern has been raised about the lack of social distancing amongst other parents outside the perimeter fence, particularly whilst waiting for children at staggered collection times. We would **respectfully request that everyone does maintain a safe social distance and encourage the use of face coverings when appropriate**. However, **we are unable to police this** and have been categorically informed previously by the authorities, this is beyond our jurisdiction even when parents have complained about each other. Indeed our local PCSOs also have limited powers or capacity to do so given that the same situation is faced by every school at present. Again, we thank you for your understanding with this and consideration of the different views which people hold.

Please do remember that late arrivals can be admitted at the next gate entry time with the subsequent year group when parents have notified the Office of their presence. A colleague from the receiving year group will be able to meet the child as necessary.

### **School Menu**

As you are aware, we have only been able to offer a cold lunch option for our children so far this year. I am pleased to announce that we have received delivery of an amazing new **'Pasta Station'** this week. We are now able to offer our children a warm pasta meal instead of the sandwich option. This is a serving of warm pasta in a disposable thermal pot with a choice of pasta sauce. The current sauce options are either **Tomato and Herbs** or **Vegetarian Bolognese**. I am sure that this will be really popular especially now that the weather is colder. Meals can be paid for via Parent Pay and the children can then let their teacher know what option they would like each day in the usual manner. The sandwich options will also be available daily.

### Flu Immunisation

The majority of our children have received their flu immunisations from the nursing team who visited the academy on Tuesday this week. If some children missed this opportunity and parents would still like for this to happen, please see the additional information attached where and how this can be arranged.

### Children in Need

**Next Friday, 13<sup>th</sup> November** we will be participating in the national Children in Need Day and we invite everyone to '**wear spots**' and contribute **£1** for the wonderful causes the fund supports each year.

### Remembrance Day

We have been asked by Morley Town Council to inform you that, rather than congregating at the normal cenotaph this year, they would like people to stand on their doorsteps during the two minute silence if they wish to do so.

### Uniform Flexibility

We do thank all parents and children for observing our uniform dress code, this is very much appreciated. With the Covid procedures in place, the classroom windows are still open for ventilation when necessary and this, unfortunately, can mean a lower temperature than we would usually like in the rooms at this time of year. Therefore, we would recommend the wearing of extra layers for warmth and please do ensure children have warm coats for outside play.

We would still ask that children avoid changing for PE and Games by coming dressed for those lessons but please do be aware that **warm tracksuits or leggings** etc will be allowed. To facilitate this there will not be colour restrictions at this time.

### Thank you!

In spite of the huge challenges at this time, we are determined to try our very best to keep going and we thank you all for your support and understanding, particularly when this means collecting children at short notice and continuing with remote learning at home. Your **positivity is very much appreciated** and certainly helps to alleviate the strain on colleagues which the alternative would undoubtedly cause. As the crisis proceeds, we anticipate it simply will not be possible to correspond with all individual queries but we will try to address them in this weekly correspondence which is inevitably getting longer. Thank you for reading this far!

Please do continue to follow all guidelines during the lockdown in order to keep safe and well.

Yours sincerely

Stephanie Makin  
Principal and the Westerton Team