



BLACKMINSTER MIDDLE SCHOOL

Executive Headteacher: Ms Linda McQuone BSc(Hons), MA(Ed), PGCE, NPQH, MCCT

Station Road, South Littleton, Evesham
Worcestershire, WR11 8TG
Telephone: 01386 830311
office@blackminster.worcs.sch.uk
www.blackminster.worcs.sch.uk

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Dear parents and carers,

You will be aware that we have experienced a rise in numbers of COVID cases across the school in the last couple of weeks. The rise is particularly acute in Year 7.

We have been working closely with Public Health England and the Local Authority to manage risks and reduce the possibility of transmission within school, and you are of course aware that we reintroduced a number of control measures last week. However, numbers have continued to rise and it has therefore been decided that Year 7 will move to remote learning as from tomorrow (September 30th). They are asked to work at home until October 8th, and return to school on Monday October 11th, provided that they are experiencing no symptoms (please see below).

This is an action we had desperately hoped to avoid, and a decision that has not been made lightly. We hope that this will allow a break in chains of transmission and allow us to get back to in-person learning as soon as possible.

Frequently Asked Questions

Why Year 7?

Year 7 has the highest proportion of infected students, so it makes sense to go to remote learning with this year group.

What about Year 6 and Year 8?

Year 6 and Year 8 students will continue to work in school as normal. We do ask for your support in encouraging children to follow the control measures that we have in place – wearing masks in corridors and communal areas, washing and/or sanitizing hands on entry to every room, wearing PE kit on PE days, wearing coats and warm clothing to be comfortable with open windows and breaktimes outside, and other measures I outlined to you in my letter of 16th September.

What can we do to stop this happening with other year groups?

We very strongly encourage students in ALL year groups to undertake lateral flow tests (LFTs) twice a week and report the results to the NHS. This can help to identify asymptomatic cases that could be unwittingly spreading the virus. Test kits are available free from school, and from many other outlets in the community.

If your child has ANY symptoms that could be COVID-19, you should not send them to school, but take them for a PCR test at a test centre. Please note that the “classic” symptoms of COVID are

- A temperature
- A new, continuous cough
- A change in taste and/or smell

However, the delta variant (which is now the most prevalent variant in the UK) can show in children as



- Headache
- Sickness / nausea

If your child is experiencing any of these symptoms, please do not send them to school but get a PCR test.

We'd also ask parents and carers of children in all year groups to follow all government guidelines in order to minimize possible transmission in the community which could then lead to further educational disruption.

My child is in Year 7 but I'm a key worker

We appreciate that the decision to send children home will be disruptive for many families, and it is not a decision that we have taken lightly. If your child has an EHCP, if they are Looked After, if they have a Social Worker, or if both parents are a critical workers and required at work your child will be able to attend school. If you fall into any of these categories, please call the office to let us know. However, I must point out that the decision to move to remote learning for Year 7 is to minimize the number of children in school and reduce transmission. Having extra children in school means that this is not as effective and risks us having to go to remote learning for longer, or for more students. I'd therefore ask all parents and carers to consider this very carefully and only send children in if there really is no alternative. We are pleased and proud to support critical workers, but we need to minimize educational disruption as much as possible, and ask for your support and understanding in this.

How will my child keep up with school work?

We will be providing a program of remote education that will be equivalent to that which children would be receiving in school. There will be a mixture of live lessons and on-line content. Live lessons will be provided through Teams (as it was during our last period of remote provision) and your child will be sent the links to join. Online work will be set through Show My Homework. The timetable for this will be sent to you, and the provision will start on September 30th.

Work for children in Year 6 and Year 8 who are at home due to isolation, for example, will continue to be set on Show My Homework.

My very sincere thanks go to all of our parents and carers for your understanding and support while we try to balance the need to protect public health against everyone's desire to avoid disruption to children's education. This is a horrible reminder that the pandemic is not yet over. School staff and governors, Public Health England and the Local Authority all hope very much that this short-term measure will be enough to break chains of transmission so that we can get children back into school safely.

Yours sincerely



Linda McQuone
Executive Headteacher

