



EL/td/091120

Dear Parents and Carers,

As our second national lockdown gets underway, I am writing to update you on progress in school and to make sure you have the latest information both on COVID-safety and on wider safety and support measures to support you and your families during these very challenging times. There is a substantial amount of information here: please take the time to read and do please come back to me if you have any queries.

You will find the following information below:

- Form Tutor Support
- Asking for Help
- Education Continuity for Students who are Self-Isolating
- COVID-safety in school
- COVID case management and self-isolation guidelines
- Safety – Road Safety & Knife Crime Update
- School Uniform

#### **Form Tutor Support**

Currently, we are keeping staff and student movement around school to a minimum and this means that our students do not get to see their Form Tutor every day. We know that regular contact with a go-to person makes a huge difference to our students. This is especially the case for students who may be feeling more anxious during this pandemic.

Last week, we made sure that every student could email their Form Tutor using their school email address. While we know this isn't the same as face to face contact, we are really encouraging students to use this channel of communication. Form Tutors will then do their best to keep in email contact and when possible, make a time to meet up with students who would like that extra help.

Likewise, if you have any concerns as a parent or carer, do please email your child's form tutor directly so they are aware of the issues and can support you and your child as needed. If you are not sure who to contact, please ring Main Reception on 0121 453 1778 and we will provide you the appropriate email contact details.

#### **Asking for Help**

I am acutely aware that many of our students and families are facing additional stresses and challenges, especially with the latest National Lockdown. Each of us is experiencing a range of losses as the normality of life is so drastically altered – whatever those pressures, there can be no doubt that we are all having to find new ways to cope with this unique set of challenges. We know that family breakdown, domestic violence and abuse in the home are all on the increase as the pandemic continues. It can be extremely hard to know where to turn for help and to make the first step of reaching out.

Please do not hesitate to contact us at school if you need access to further support – whether for your own well-being or that of your children. The Safeguarding Handbook for Parents and Carers on our website provides a wealth of useful information, and can be found here: <http://www.colmers.bham.sch.uk/wp-content/uploads/Parent-and-Carer-Safeguarding-Help-and-Support-2020.pdf>.



If your child is struggling during this second period of national lockdown, they may find some useful support on the Young Minds website: <https://youngminds.org.uk/find-help/looking-after-yourself/coronavirus-and-mental-health/>. Please do also encourage them to reach out and contact their Form Tutor via email.

One thing you can be sure of is that if the pandemic is impacting on you or your child's well-being, you are not alone. Our school remains a place where you can reach out for help : we have links to a host of wider support networks and agencies so the chances are that if we are not able to help you directly, we will be able to put you in touch with someone who can!

### **Education Continuity for Students Self-Isolating**

Remote learning for any students who are self-isolating will continue to be provided through Class Charts, where your child can access all of the work set by their class teachers. If you have any issues accessing the work, or your child gets stuck and needs help, please encourage them to email their class teacher in the first instance. Class teachers will always endeavour to respond on the same day although there may be delays at times when staff are teaching other classes.

If your child wants to either catch up on or extend their knowledge of specific topics, the Oak National Academy has a range of fantastic resources your child can access at any time. These can be found here: <https://www.thenational.academy/>.

If your child does not have access to ICT (either a device or wi-fi) to study at home, please contact us on 0121 453 1778 and we will endeavour to support. This is also the number to call if you have any difficulty accessing Class Charts.

### **Safety Outside School : Road Safety and Safety from Knife Crime**

Last week, one of our students was involved in a very serious road traffic accident. This is the most unfortunate of reminders of how very important it is that our students think carefully about crossing the road safely at all times. This is particularly important on the Bristol Road: too many students are tempted to run across the road at inappropriate locations rather than taking the time to walk to a proper crossing point. I have also seen students take unnecessary risks walking the wrong side of road barriers, creating a risk to passing traffic. At this time of year, as darker nights draw in, it is absolutely essential that students take extra care to be visible through wearing a bright or reflective outer layer. I would be grateful if you could reinforce this message to your child.

As parents and carers, you can help us considerably to ensure that Belton Grove is a safe area for students crossing the road by avoiding this particular area for dropping off or collecting your child. Please use neighbouring roads or Morrisons' / McDonalds' car parks as far safer alternatives.

Below you will find a joint partnership letter from all of the schools we work with locally along with our colleagues from West Midlands Police. Knife crime remains a persistent threat and one that we know is very frightening for students and families across our community.



### **COVID case management and self-isolation guidelines**

If your child or any member of the family is showing any of the COVID-19 symptoms - fever, continuous cough or loss of taste or smell - all family members should remain at home and self-isolate. The person who is symptomatic should get a test and only if that test is negative should your child return to school.

If a member of your household tests positive for COVID-19, all other members of the household must self-isolate for 14 days from the onset of symptoms. Even if you or your child tests negative for coronavirus when another family member has tested positive, you still need to remain at home for the full 14 days – this is because you can contract the virus after getting a negative test result.

In the event we have a positive case in school, we are required to carry out our own contact tracing. We track back and identify contacts from 2 days before the positive case had symptoms or, for asymptomatic cases, 2 days from the positive test result. Our contact tracing is based on seating plans and the contact notes of staff and students, so that any person who has been or is likely to have been in contact with the positive case is asked to self-isolate. We are working very hard with our students to improve social distancing at Brunch and before school which in turn will reduce the risk of an entire year group bubble having to self-isolate, however if we are unable to confirm contacts with confidence then the only safe course of action will be for an entire year group to self-isolate.

The guidance on what is required for anyone required to stay at home can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-stay-at-home-guidance/stay-at-home-guidance-for-households-with-possible-coronavirus-covid-19-infection>

Contacts must self-isolate for 14 days from the date of last contact with the positive case. Day one is counted as the day after the last contact. Return to school is allowed on day 15.

Further details and the PHE Flow Chart setting out what is required can be found here on our website: [http://www.colmers.bham.sch.uk/wp-content/uploads/Covid\\_19\\_Flowchart\\_Managing\\_Syhoool\\_setting\\_30\\_September\\_2020\\_A4.pdf](http://www.colmers.bham.sch.uk/wp-content/uploads/Covid_19_Flowchart_Managing_Syhoool_setting_30_September_2020_A4.pdf)

### **COVID-Safety In School**

As cases are increasing locally and nationally, we have produced a COVID-Safety Checklist for students and one for staff in school so that everyone can regularly check they are following all of our safety measures.

Since the start of this half term, we have been asking students to write down at the start of any lesson any students that have been contacts either before school, at Brunch or out of school. A contact is someone who has spent more than one minute closer than 1 metre distance; or more than 15 minutes between 1 metre and 2 metres distance.

If we have a positive case, students and staff identified as contacts will be required to self-isolate. In some circumstances, the only safe course of action will be for a whole year bubble self-isolation, as was the case with year 7 last week. However, if we can reduce the impact on the year group through students recording their contacts, we may be able to avoid sending whole year bubbles home.

The Student COVID-Safety Checklist is included below. It highlights the need to hand sanitise at the start and end of every lesson, to wear face coverings at all times in communal areas including the playground and to go to and from lessons walking in single file on the left, no shouting and avoiding physical contact. We are reminding students



regularly that before school and at Brunch, they should only mix in small groups, following the rule of 6, wearing face coverings and keeping a note of those they have spent time with.

It would be really helpful if you could go through the checklist with your child to ensure they understand all of the details and to reinforce how important it is that they follow these guidelines.



**COVID-Safe Student Checklist**

Before School	Start of Lesson	End of Lesson	Brunch
<input type="checkbox"/> Do not arrive before 8.30 unless I plan to go to the canteen before Breakfast <input type="checkbox"/> On arrival, wear my face mask and go to the external area for my year bubble <input type="checkbox"/> Sanitise or wash my hands <input type="checkbox"/> Do not run around, shout or make physical contact with anyone else <input type="checkbox"/> Stay in small groups of less than 6 people and try to keep more than 1 metre distance <input type="checkbox"/> Avoid face to face contact at less than 1 metre <input type="checkbox"/> On the bell, line up in single file to go into the building	<input type="checkbox"/> Hand Sanitise <input type="checkbox"/> Write down contacts in my planner (people less than 1m distance) <input type="checkbox"/> Sit in my seating plan seat <input type="checkbox"/> Stay in or behind my seat unless told by the teacher <input type="checkbox"/> Do not share equipment without sanitising hands	<b>If staying in the same classroom:</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Hand <u>sanitise</u> <input type="checkbox"/> Stay in my seat <input type="checkbox"/> Prepare for next lesson or read a book  <b>If moving to a different room or to Brunch:</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Hand <u>sanitise</u> <input type="checkbox"/> Put my mask on <input type="checkbox"/> Leave one row at a time as instructed by the teacher <input type="checkbox"/> <u>Stay in single file on the left at all times</u> on stairs and corridors <input type="checkbox"/> Avoid physical contact and do not shout <input type="checkbox"/> Make a mental note contacts – people I have spent more than 1 minute with at less than 1 metre distance	<input type="checkbox"/> Queue in single <u>file</u> . Make a mental note of the people near me. <input type="checkbox"/> Either sit in the canteen or stay in one place outside with a small group of less than 6 people <input type="checkbox"/> Make a mental note of the people I have spent my Brunch with – my contacts <input type="checkbox"/> Do not run around, play physical <u>games</u> or make physical contact with other students <input type="checkbox"/> Avoid face to face contact at less than 1 metre <input type="checkbox"/> <u>Wear my face mask at all times</u> except when I am eating <input type="checkbox"/> Hand sanitise before and after eating <input type="checkbox"/> On the bell, line up in single file to go into the building
<p><b>Toilet Use:</b> I should only go to the toilet at Brunch. I may be allowed to the toilet at the Teacher's discretion during the lesson. This should only be when <u>absolutely necessary</u>. I must sanitise my hands before and after going to the toilet. I <u>should not have contact with anyone else in the toilet area – keep at least 2m distance at all times</u>. I must <u>wear my face mask at all times</u> in communal areas, which includes the toilets.</p>			

**School Uniform**

Many thanks to parents and carers for all your efforts to ensure your children have the correct school uniform. It does make a big difference to the feel and standards of our school community when our students look smart. It feels especially important to maintain a strong Colmers identity right now, helping our students with consistent routines and expectations as a way of supporting their well-being.

On PE days, students are now expected to wear a school jumper over their PE top, with joggers over their shorts or leggings underneath as an alternative. On all other days, we are expecting students to wear full uniform, with the option of a coat as an added extra on top if classrooms are particularly chilly. As the weather gets cooler and we keep classrooms well ventilated, your child may well also benefit from an extra layer under their school shirt.

I hope you find the information provided here useful – as ever, please contact us if you have any queries or concerns.

Best wishes,

Emma Leaman  
Headteacher



Dear Parents/Carers

Police and schools in the city are committed to working together to protect our young people from becoming victims of knife and weapon related crime.

We use a range of tactics including educational inputs and in-school searches to ensure that students are well-informed about the consequences of carrying weapons; and identify those that continue to do so.

It is important that the police, schools and families work together to protect young people. To do this, parents must be aware of the warning signs and talk to children about carrying weapons. The consequences of being found in possession of a knife are serious and long lasting, affecting education, employment and travel opportunities, but most critically the risk to life.

Some young people carry weapons because they feel it will provide protection or increase the respect they are given by their friends, but the sad fact is that they are more likely to become victims of serious violence. Parents should also be aware that girls sometimes carry or store weapons for their boyfriends or other male friends because they believe they are less likely to be stopped by the police. Their reasons are often misguided loyalty or love. However, it is still a crime if they are caught carrying a knife or other weapon.

#### WARNING SIGNS:

These signs don't always mean the worst is happening and could just be normal teenage behaviour:

1. Have they become withdrawn from the family and/or school?
2. Is their school or college reporting worrying changes in behaviour, academic achievement or attendance?
3. Have they lost interest in positive activities such as sports clubs?
4. Do they stay out unusually late without giving a reason and are vague about their whereabouts?
5. Have they stopped seeing old friends and started hanging out with a new group?
6. Are they secretive about the contents of their bag?
7. Are they defensive if you ask what is in their possession or if they are hiding anything?
8. Has their attitude changed about carrying knives/weapons? For example, justifying it by saying people carry them for self-defence?
9. Have any items gone missing from the kitchen, tool box or garage?
10. Have you found a weapon hidden amongst their possessions?

#### WHAT TO DO IF YOU'RE CONCERNED

Speak to them calmly and explain the risks and consequences. Further advice on talking to your child is available at: [www.noknivesbetterlives.com/parents/having-the-conversation](http://www.noknivesbetterlives.com/parents/having-the-conversation)

You may wish to contact a member of the Pastoral Team at school, if you feel your child isn't listening or is at risk - we can talk through your concerns and plan a way forward together.

For the latest guidance and signposting opportunities please visit: [www.policeandschools.org.uk](http://www.policeandschools.org.uk)



It is essential that we work together to reduce the chances of children bringing a weapon into school. Ours, like most other schools, will take very firm action in relation to any student found to be carrying a knife, both on and off the school premises and the police will be informed. This will almost inevitably lead to the loss of your child's school place, by way of a permanent exclusion or managed-move, as a sanction.

### THE POLICE RESPONSE TO WEAPONS POSSESSION

Where young people are involved in crime, the police will try to avoid criminalising them. However, carrying a knife or other weapon is very serious and the most likely outcome will be a charge and court appearance or a caution, delivered by the Youth Offending Service.

Update: West Midlands Police can use **Section 60** powers to stop and search young people.

*"Section 60 of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994 gives senior police officers powers to authorise use of stop and search without reasonable grounds, where there is a risk of violence or it is believed that weapons are being carried".*

If a young person has been stopped by police using **Section 60** powers, it does not necessarily mean they are doing anything wrong, but officers have been given extensive search powers where they can search to prevent violence without needing suspicion that they may be carrying a weapon. This tool is being used to end violence and keep young people safe. West Midlands Police realise that it may be upsetting for some innocent young people, but with fear of weapons growing, we cannot take chances.

If you are aware that a fight or trouble is brewing, or if you hear someone has a knife, please report this to the police. If a young person is scared of someone, the answer is not to carry a knife or weapon.

If you know of an individual, or a group of young people, that are potentially carrying weapons, always contact the Police - via Live Chat: <https://west-midlands.police.uk/contact-us/live-chat> or by calling 101.

Alternatively you can call Crimestoppers anonymously on: 0800 555 111 | <https://crimestoppers-uk.org>

**If a crime is taking place or a life is in danger always call 999 immediately.**

Yours faithfully,

**Emma Leaman**  
Headteacher/Principal  
Colmers School & Sixth Form College

**Stephen Graham**  
Chief Superintendent  
West Midlands Police