

04.11.2020

Dear Parent / Carer

As we look to a new half term, mutually focussed on how we can safely and securely inspire our children through the provision of excellent education and care, I have never been more convinced of the need for us to remain connected and interdependent. Indeed, the challenge that will be facing us all is how we protect ourselves, each other and our community so that, together, we continue to make the difference. Times are hard. Harder, perhaps, than many of us have known. And, at least in the short to midterm, the challenges we face appear unlikely to reduce.

As I am sure you are aware, on Saturday evening, the Prime Minister gave a Downing Street press conference, alongside Chief Scientific Adviser Sir Patrick Vallance and Chief Medical Officer Chris Whitty, to announce a four-week national lockdown in England from Thursday 5th November until 2nd December.

The Prime Minister's statement and slides to accompany Saturday's coronavirus press conference can be seen below:

[Prime Minister's Statement](#)

[Press Conference Slides](#)

More information about the new national restrictions which come into force on 5th November can be found below:

[National Restrictions](#)

In his statement, the Prime Minister announced childcare, early years settings, schools, colleges and universities will be kept open to prioritise children and young people's education and wellbeing. Perhaps a further key reason for keeping schools open is the impact that school closure seems to have on those students that are most disadvantaged. This is explained in the article below.

[Go to Article](#)

Within this parent update are some key pieces of information that illustrate the decisions that we have decided to make as a school in order to maximise the health and safety of everybody.

Decision Regarding the wider use of Face Masks in School

I have met with the Chair of Governors, The Chair of the Trust and the CEO to discuss the wider use of Face masks from 5th November as a further protective measure. In view of the impending national lockdown, and taking account of the compelling arguments for the wearing of facemasks/coverings in all settings, we have taken the decision to ask all members of the school community to wear face masks in school at all times. This will mean that face masks will now need to be worn in classrooms at all times and this will apply to both students and staff. This decision for the wearing of face coverings has been ratified by the full Trust Board.

The measure will be implemented to coincide with the national lockdown timeline meaning that all staff and students will be required to wear their face masks at all times within the school from Thursday November 5th.

The article below is absolutely superb in explaining why Face Masks are important as a key protective measure in helping to control the virus.

[Go to Article](#)

Equally, I would ask you to consider the type of face mask that a child is using as they do not all perform equally well in terms of their role which is, of course, to protect others. The article below explains this issue very well.

[Go to Article](#)

This measure has been ratified by the full Trust Board and will be in addition to the well-established social distancing and hygiene measures.

The importance of ventilation in schools– The Copleston position and updated government guidance

It has been made very clear in recent reports that alongside the wearing of a facemask/covering there should be good ventilation in classrooms to further create conditions which contribute to a reduction in the circulation of the COVID 19 virus. The example below, based on scientific modelling, perhaps helps to explain why ventilation is so important for reducing the transmission of the virus.

Example

Imagine six people gather together in an indoor space, one of whom is infected. A significant number of coronavirus outbreaks are caused by this kind of gathering, mainly between family and friends. Irrespective of whether safe distances are maintained, if the six people spend four hours together talking loudly, without wearing a face mask in a room with no ventilation, scientific modelling suggests that five will become infected. If face masks are worn, up to four people are at risk of infection depending on the quality of the mask. Masks alone will not prevent infection if the exposure is prolonged. The risk of infection drops to below one when the group uses face masks, shortens the length of the gathering by half and ventilates the space used. This principle can be applied to schools also and illustrates the importance of both face coverings and adequate ventilation in helping schools to operate as safely as possible.

Updated Government guidance has been amended to reflect that we are now well into the school year and thus references to 'from September' have been removed.

[Go to Government Guidance](#)

There are one or two more substantial changes, perhaps most notably regarding **ventilation**. These are as follows.

- Mechanical ventilation systems – these should be adjusted to increase the ventilation rate wherever possible, and checked to confirm that normal operation meets current guidance (if possible, systems should be adjusted to full fresh air or, if not, then systems should be operated as normal as long as they are within a single room and supplemented by an outdoor air supply)
- Natural ventilation – opening windows (in cooler weather windows should be opened just enough to provide constant background ventilation and opened more fully during breaks to purge the air in the space). Opening internal doors can also assist with creating a throughput of air
- Natural ventilation – if necessary external opening doors may also be used (as long as they are not fire doors and where safe to do so)

Further advice on this can be found in the Health and Safety Executive guidance on air conditioning and ventilation during the coronavirus outbreak and CIBSE coronavirus (COVID 19) advice and these can be seen below:

[Air Conditioning Guidance](#)

[CIBSE Covid 19 Advice](#)

To balance the need for increased ventilation while maintaining a comfortable temperature, the following measures should also be used as appropriate:

- Opening high level windows in preference to low level to reduce draughts
- Increasing the ventilation while spaces are unoccupied (e.g. between classes, during break and lunch, when a room is unused)
- Providing flexibility to allow additional, suitable indoor clothing. For more information see the government guidance on school uniform below:

[School Uniform](#)

- Rearranging furniture where possible to avoid direct drafts

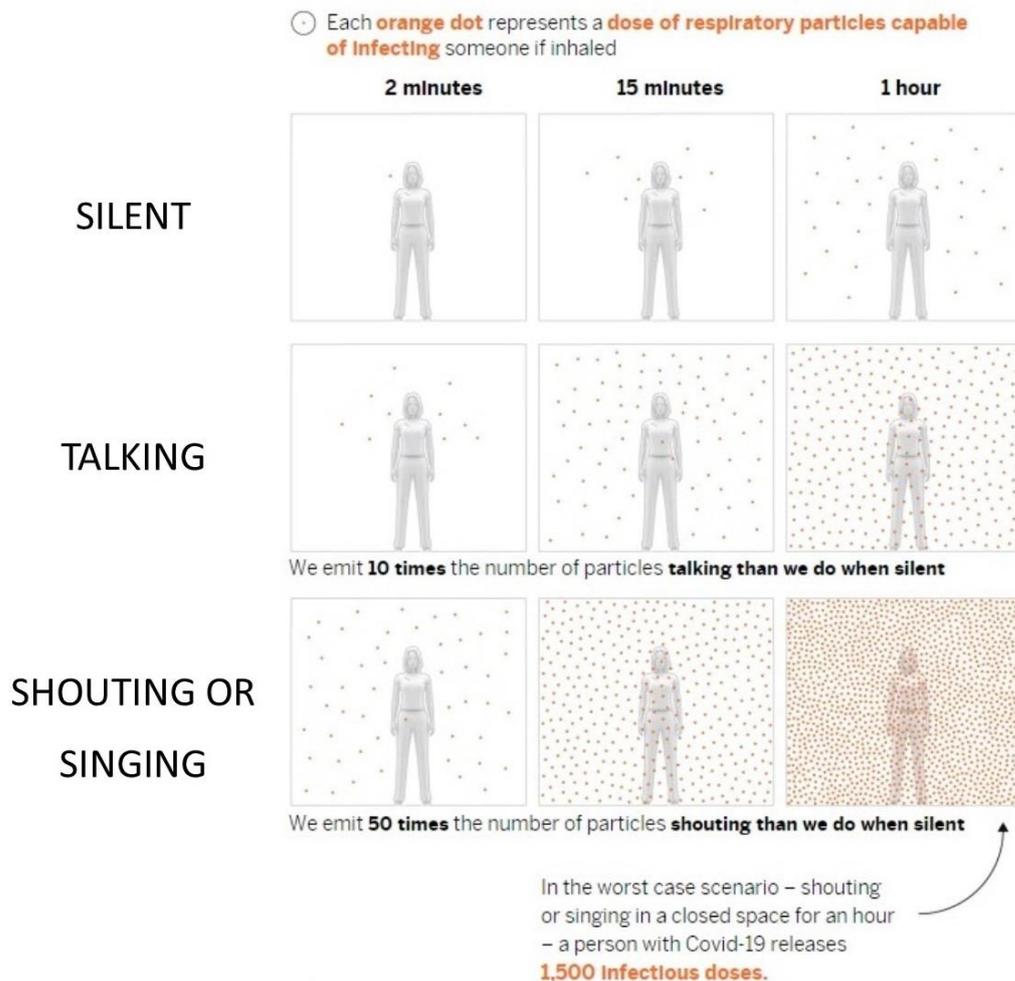
The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) is aware of the issues that some schools face, sometimes as a result of practical obstacles such as not having classroom windows that open. They have stated that:

- The spirit of such advice is to do what can reasonably be done within each setting.

As Principal, I would like to assure you that we are aware of all the guidance (which I have shared with you today) and we are applying to the very best of our ability.

The importance of quiet purposeful classrooms

At the beginning of the pandemic, it was believed that the large droplets we expel when we cough or sneeze were the main vehicle of transmission. But we now know that shouting and singing in indoor, poorly ventilated spaces over a prolonged period of time also increases the [risk of contagion](#). This is because speaking in a loud voice/shouting releases 50 times more virus-laden particles than when we don't speak at all. These aerosols, if not diffused through ventilation, become increasingly concentrated, which increases the risk of infection. Scientists have shown that these particles – which we also release into the atmosphere when simply breathing and which can escape from improperly worn face masks – can infect people who spend more than a few minutes within a two-meter radius of an infected person, depending on the length of time and the nature of the interaction. The diagram below illustrates the potential impact of loud talking within a classroom. As you know we have very high expectations in terms of student behaviour at Copleston where we place a high level of importance on quiet purposeful classrooms. This is, in my opinion, not only excellent for learning but extremely important in helping to reduce the risk of transmission.



The layout of classrooms at Copleston

I have received a few questions from parents regarding the perceived changes to the layout of our classrooms so I thought that I would take this opportunity to clarify the situation. Staff have to respect the 2 metre social distancing rule when teaching students as much as possible. Indeed, there are clear 'contact' criteria that must be followed by staff to ensure staff and students stay safe and minimise the risk to everyone. Staff are expected to teach from the front of the room and stay at a 2 metre distance whenever possible during the lesson. To assist with this, each classroom has a defined area marked off on the carpet at the front of the classroom which the member of staff must use if they are to stay within the contact criteria. This has been in place since we started in receiving students in early June. During a half-term, inevitably the furniture in a room will move slightly and the markings will become unclear as they have been walked over

Over the October half-term break, we have taken the opportunity to renew these markings on the floor and re-align the furniture so that it reflects the social distancing measures as we had in June and September, thus ensuring everyone stays safe as much as possible within the classroom. We have used a different coloured tape this half-term which gives a much more visual reminder for staff and students as they move about the room. This new colour has clearly had much more of a noticeable impact on staff and students than the previous colour used.

Concluding Remarks

Finally, I believe that in the simple act of looking outwardly and beyond ourselves, we find hope in our collective actions, in our solidarity.

In the words of Emily Dickinson:

*"Hope" is the thing with feathers -
That perches in the soul -
And sings the tune without the words -
And never stops - at all.*

Despite the difficulties and the pressures of living in the context of a pandemic, it is wonderful how we are all working together to provide an excellent education to change the world for the better.

As parents your support is hugely valued. Do not ever doubt that you make a huge difference.

With my very best wishes.

Mr AB Green

Principal