



September 21st 2020

Dear Parents and Carers,

COVID-19 Update

Firstly a huge **thank you** to parents and carers who made contact with myself and other members of our staff team last week after I informed you we had a confirmed case among staff. I appreciate how worrying this was for our whole school community and thank you for your continued support as we find our way through these highly challenging circumstances. By way of reminder, we have put in place a comprehensive set of **safety measures** to reduce the risk of virus transmission; you can find details of these in the Parent/Carer Handbook <http://www.colmers.bham.sch.uk/parent-carer-handbook/>

Our staff team continue to work incredibly hard to ensure these measures are implemented robustly. We appreciate your support as we move forwards with the requirement from last week for everyone in our school community to wear **face coverings** in communal areas. It is absolutely essential that your child brings a face covering to school every day: from tomorrow, we will be issuing a **Debit – Missing Face Mask** to those students who need us to provide a face covering for the day as this is essential school equipment during this period of additional restrictions in Birmingham. Please note if there are **health reasons** that mean your child cannot wear a mask, or may need support to manage wearing a mask, please contact your child's **Head of Year** – we have a supply of sunflower lanyards to recognise and support those students.

I appreciate guidance can be very confusing at the moment. You may find it very helpful to read **the COVID-19 FAQs** published by the City Council, which can be found here on our website.

<http://colmers.bham.sch.uk/wp-content/uploads/COVID-19-Frequently-Asked-Questions-Birmingham-City-Council.pdf>.

As a quick reminder, your child will need to **self-isolate** and should seek a test under the following circumstances:

- If they show one of the 3 COVID-19 Symptoms, namely a new, continuous cough; a fever; loss of taste and/or smell.
- If they live with someone who displays any of the above symptoms and is self-isolating accordingly.
- If they have had close contact with someone who has tested positive for COVID-19, either in school or out of school, within 48 hours of that person becoming symptomatic.

If you are in any doubt or would like further advice, please contact Reception on 0121 453 1778 and we will find the right person to get back to you.

Social Media

Last week saw some worrying use of social media, both on our school social media sites and between students. As a school community, it is essential that we manage our social media interaction to support **positive communication** and reduce safety risks.

School Social Media:

Our School Facebook, Instagram and Twitter accounts have always been a source of great pride, allowing us to celebrate success stories as well as keep you informed of key messages. The news we had to share was difficult last week and I am grateful to parents and carers who contacted me directly to raise concerns. Like many of you, I was disappointed to see our social media pages being used by parents and carers as a vehicle to express very negative responses and share information inappropriately.

I would like to remind all parents and carers who have a concern or query that you can **contact me directly** via email at any time or ring the school requesting a call: I will always endeavour to respond as soon as possible or ask one of my school colleagues to get back to you. I found it enormously helpful to speak with so many of you last week: it was a reminder of just how difficult it is at this time to know what to do for the best as a parent or carer. It also reinforced how important it is that we stay strong together for the benefit of our young people.

If you have a **complaint**, you are absolutely entitled to voice that but should do so through our Complaints Procedure which can be found on our website: <http://www.colmers.bham.sch.uk/wp-content/uploads/Complaints-Policy.pdf>. Please be assured that all complaints are taken seriously and looked into carefully.

We have a responsibility as adults to model appropriate social media interaction to our students and I would value your continued support helping us maintain a positive school social media presence that strengthens our school community.

Student Social Media Use

If my Heads of Year had a pound for every time they have to sort problems between students that have started over social media, they would be able to retire very early! Last week saw too many instances in which students made wholly inappropriate use of social media. These ranged from threatening messages between students to at its worst, a very small number of students inciting others to fight, taking video footage of the ensuing violence and uploading this for others to view.

I appreciate how distressing these events are for students and families in our school community. It seems that the fuelling of issues via social media combined with the length of time students have been out of school routines has created some heightened tensions: we are working hard in supporting all of our students to settle back into school, reminding them that we expect everyone to be treated with respect and to be safe within our community. We also push very strongly the expectation that students report concerns and let us know if problems are brewing between individuals or groups. I hope that the strengthened partnerships we have built with you during lockdown will help us tackle these serious issues together and prevent incidents of unacceptable social media use, especially where it fuels violence or abuse.

As ever, we would appreciate your support and vigilance monitoring your child's social media use, preventing them from engaging in negative on-line activity and alerting us to any concerns that your child raises as a result of social media activity.

As ever, please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any concerns, via email at eleaman@colmers.school or by contacting Reception on 0121 453 1778. Please continue to take good care during these difficult times and always reach out for help and support from us if needed.

Best wishes,



Emma Leaman
Headteacher