Monday 4th January 2021

Dear Parents and Carers,

We would like to start our letter by wishing you all a Happy New Year, it is likely to be another eventful one. Let’s hope that we get to a point where we can soon meet our family and friends whenever we want to.

Firstly, we would like to confirm that all schools in the Horizon Multi Academy Trust will open as normal tomorrow (Tuesday 5th January.) I met with the Trust Board yesterday, Mr Smithers and the Headteachers across the MAT met this morning and following this, Mr Smithers held a remote meeting with all members of staff at Elburton Primary School this afternoon. During these meetings a full review of the risk assessments was carried out and further alterations have been made to ensure the safety and well-being of all children, families and staff.

Mr Smithers and I are also following up on a communication that we made with the year 3 bubble last week. As you may be aware we have had several positive COVID results from children and some staff in year 3. These started to come out at the beginning of the holiday and due to the dates of possible exposure, isolation and results coming back the isolation period was during the holiday.

Throughout the time, Mr Smithers and myself were in regular contact with the Department for Education, Public Health (Plymouth), the South West Health Protection Team, the Trust Board and the Local Authority. At the end of last week we had a meeting with the Director of Public Health in Plymouth, to discuss the situation at Elburton and the community where the number of cases have been higher. Below you will see a statement from the Director…

*‘We have seen more spread than usual with this outbreak; however, one of the strange things with COVID is that a few people will pass it on to many, but most people will pass it on to only a few – it is not fully understood why. There has understandably been concern that this might be the new variant. We have not been notified of any cases proven to be the new variant in Plymouth, but we can’t totally rule it out either; but the good news is that the control measures are exactly the same.*

*The measures that the school has taken and that parents and families have followed over the Christmas break mean that the year 3 bubble along with other children are safe to return to school (unless self-isolating due to a confirmed case, being close contacts of a case, or household contacts of someone with symptoms).*

*Unfortunately, with fairly high rates of COVID in the city, we are likely to see cases across all of our communities and so we can’t rule out seeing further cases in our schools; but these would be unlikely to be linked to this initial outbreak.’*

In light of this situation, the higher numbers nationally, the possible impact of the new variant strain and other issues we have once again reviewed the risk assessments at Elburton to check the processes and procedures. This has been reviewed both internally and with external partners. The South West Health Protection Team and Local Authority have stated that the risk assessments at Elburton Primary School are both thorough and well thought through. Some people have questioned the year group bubble approach at the school. On review of this, we have decided not to change the school approach, as there would be an impact on families for drop off and pick up (extension of the timings of this procedure), staffing across the school would not be adequate to manage this safely and to this point the approach has work effectively. The children are kept in their separate classes as much as possible during the day. Our external advisers also felt that we it was vital to have an approach that was manageable longer term as staffing levels can be affected at regular intervals.

The team at the school are fully prepared for the return in January and are looking forward to seeing the children. You will be fully aware of the regular changes with expectations for schools linked to the pandemic, we will keep you up to date with anything that will impact on you or your child. Throughout this situation we have been completely transparent and open about issues in and surrounding the school and will continue to do so, as it is a vital part of the positive relationship that we have.

Once again thank you for your continued support, we know how difficult this period of time is for the whole school community. Personally I would like to thank Mr Smithers for his proactive approach during this period of time.

Best wishes

Maria Anderson Keith Smithers

CEO Acting Headteacher