

15 July 2021

Dear parents/carers and students

I wanted to write to update you on the status of Covid-19 at Ridgeway Academy and the measures that we are now being advised to take by the Covid response team at Hertfordshire Public Health. Since I last wrote to you, there has been a significant growth in the number of positive cases. From the initial case on Friday, we are now up to 18 confirmed cases with classes of year 7, 8, 9 and 10 now self-isolating. The majority of these cases are connected, and despite the controls in place at school to keep bubbles apart, students are also mixing outside school and a number of cases are siblings in the same household. While we have no official confirmation that we are experiencing the Delta variant, the increase in transmission does seem to suggest this and we also note that symptoms in young people are more similar to hay fever than the loss of taste/smell and fever that accompanied the previous strains. We have battled all this week to identify and notify close contacts, but the advice from Public Health is to try to break chains of transmission.

Sadly, having had relatively low disruption to date, we have had a spike of positive covid cases this week, which has led to a large number of students in self-isolation. In order to provide the best possible provision for the remainder of term, we have taken the decision, with the support of Hertfordshire Public Health, to move to remote learning for all students with effect from Friday 16 July 2021 until the end of term at 12.30pm on Wednesday 21 July 2021. Live lessons will be delivered through Google Classroom and students should keep to their usual timetable. If you struggle to access Google classroom please contact ictsupport@ridgeway.herts.sch.uk and we will provide technical support.

If your son/daughter has been instructed to isolate, please do ensure they do not leave the house/garden during this period. I know this is difficult; my 14-year-old son is currently in a period of isolation. However, this is important to stop further spread. A number of cases have been asymptomatic and only identified through a lateral flow test; our advice is to conduct these daily for the rest of term/isolation. Collectively we have a responsibility to ensure that we are doing everything we can to keep each other safe. This means that we must, without exception, follow the guidelines set out by the government and respect the period of self-isolation.

As per guidance from the Department for Education and Herts County Council, we are moving remaining events for the year to a virtual mode. We have postponed our Sports Day to Friday 10 September 2021, to ensure everyone in the school community can participate and enjoy the day. We will conduct our Prize Giving Celebration for each year group through Google Classroom on Tuesday 20 July 2021 and links will be sent to students on Monday 19 July 2021. Year 10 PPE results were due to be collected by students on Tuesday morning; these will now be emailed to students and families.

I will write to you again next week in the final edition of Ridgeway News with my summary of the year and to say goodbye to colleagues who are leaving. Finally, a very big thank you to all of the Students, Staff, Governors, and Parents/Carers for everything you have done this year – arguably one of the hardest years we have experienced in education. Our young people have risen to the challenges they have faced and we hope are well set for moving forward in the future. At the end of a year where we have collectively embraced covid control measures, lateral flow testing, remote education through Google Classroom and a robust process to determine teacher assessed grades; if you would like to write a message to Ridgeway staff, which I will share with them at the end of term please complete [here](#).

No one is sorer than I with the news that the end of the year is destined to finish much like the start, with disruption to education due to the pandemic. We will work hard to try to minimise learning loss and provision of a year 6 summer school and increased tutoring in the autumn will help us to bounce back. Thank you for your ongoing support, it really is appreciated.

Yours sincerely



Sarah Mitcherson
Headteacher