

21st October 2021

Dear Parents and Carers,

It has seemed like a very long and busy half term, one that we all expected to be back to normal and yet at times it has felt anything but normal. We started the year seeing Stanway cases rising, but I am pleased to say things are very different now.

We made the decision to cancel assemblies and other gatherings of large external people, such as the Open Evening. This was a difficult decision to come to because it is so important to enable the next year 7 students to see around the school, but by putting the safety of our own community first, I hope that there will have been an understanding within the families who had hoped to attend.

What we are noticing though is there is a surge in cases again in Colchester and throughout NE Essex. However, at Stanway, the number of current cases is now in single figures, so within our community, we are now seeing the opposite to what is happening in the wider community, and this is extremely pleasing and reassuring.

This leaves me with a quandary of how to approach the next half term. One option is to reduce the measures now that cases are low, but the concern here is whether that will see a second surge here. Alternatively, we could maintain the current measures to make sure we are ahead of any continuing surge in the local area.

Having heard the broadcast yesterday evening from Sajid Javid, I have made the decision to go with the latter option.

Therefore, face coverings will still be expected (unless a student is exempt) in corridors and queues. This does not include classrooms or social times outside. The students have responded well to this and I believe the results show this has worked for those busy lesson changeovers.

We will start to introduce assemblies, but for only half the year group, enabling us to ensure that there is a greater distance between the students.

External events will be kept to a minimum, but with careful planning, we are hoping to still have some face to face elements for the forthcoming Year 9 Options Evening.

Thank you for supporting what we have already put in place and for being patient when things got a little difficult this half term. Despite that set back, we are now in a very good position. Thank you in advance for your ongoing support as we all work together to make Stanway as safe as possible.

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For those of you who wanted the vaccination for your son or daughter in recent weeks, but were unable to have it here at the school, we think there may be plans for this to happen within the community, and we wait for confirmation of this from the SAIS. As soon as I hear anything, I will pass this on for you to make your decision.

As with all half term or end of term breaks, I hope you all have a safe and restful time. As we heard again last night on the news, there is an opportunity to take measures ourselves to avoid any possible spread, especially as we head into colder months and towards family celebrations at Christmas. With this in mind, please continue to take the lateral flow tests twice a week, even over half term. This is a really good way to ensure we know about cases before they spread. I will be reiterating that to staff as well.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Mr Bland', written in a cursive style.

Mr Bland