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Chief Executive: Simon Beamish, BA (Hons) MSc PGCE NPQH NLE

Monday 7th December 2020

Dear parents and carers

**RE: pupil attendance, Covid Christmas case reporting and 2021 national tests.**

The last few weeks have been tremendously challenging. We have kept our academies open to the fullest extent possible throughout the second national lockdown and more recently under the government's heightened tiered restrictions regime. Once again, I wish to pay tribute to all of my colleagues' superb efforts to ensure pupils' education has carried on uninterrupted as much as possible. Please see below some important updates as we approach the Christmas holidays.

The importance of attendance

The government has recently made clear that schools and academies are not authorised to close early by varying their term dates in the weeks leading up to Christmas. To do so would be illegal under emergency legislation put in place to assist the government in handling the current pandemic.

Leigh Academies Trust (LAT) entirely supports this approach as children have missed too much education already and the best place for them is to remain in school. Therefore, we value parents' efforts to ensure pupils attend school right up to the end of the autumn term which is Friday 18th December. Withdrawing pupils from school in the run-up to the Christmas holidays for reasons outside of the normal parameters will result in an unauthorised absence being recorded.

Reporting a confirmed case of Covid-19 after 18th December

Whilst we hope that the number of confirmed cases of Covid-19 will have reduced ahead of the forthcoming holiday, we recognise that pupils may still test positive in the days leading up to Christmas after the school term has ended. If your child tests positive between the 19th December and 24th December then we will need you to inform the Trust so that contact-tracing can be undertaken and appropriate advice given to others to self-isolate if necessary.

To enable contact-tracing to be undertaken by the Trust over the Christmas holidays once our academies are closed we are launching a parent Covid-19 reporting portal which will operate for the duration of the holiday period. This will allow all parents to report positive cases using a simple form without needing to call or email your child's academy. The portal also gives updates to parents on the status of each LAT academy over the festive period, plus further advice about how to manage positive test results and suspected symptoms. A link to the site can be found underneath.

<https://sites.google.com/latrust.org.uk/covid-19-parent-portal>

### Self-isolation notifications after 18th December

Self-isolation may be necessary for some if a child or member of staff tests positive in the 48-hours after the last day of term. Whilst most test results are generally now received within 24-hours we know others are taking a little longer so it is theoretically possible that we could need to contact you up to the 24th December.

If your child is required to self-isolate due to potential contact with a confirmed case in the last 48-hours of the term we will notify you via email where possible and the parental Covid portal (see link above) will be updated with a live log of all cases that require children to self-isolate. Unfortunately, this may mean that your child will have to self-isolate over the Christmas break which will also prevent them from being part of any planned 'Christmas bubbles' with other households. We will, of course, do everything we can to prevent this from happening but we need parents to adhere strictly to the rules as detailed below.

To try to minimise any disruption over the Christmas period we would like to remind all parents of the following rules:

1. If any member of your household displays Covid-like symptoms then all members of your household must immediately self-isolate at home and the person with symptoms must be tested before any child can return to school.
2. All children must remain at home whilst you wait for test results to be issued. If any member of the household tests positive then all children must self-isolate for 14 days.
3. If your child has had close contact with someone outside of school that has tested positive then they must self-isolate for 14 days from their last point of contact with that person.

If all parents follow these rules then the number of instances of children having to self-isolate will be greatly reduced. We appreciate your efforts to help us keep our academies open as much as possible and functioning to as near normal arrangements as we can.


### Government announcement on national tests and examinations

Last week we received the much-heralded announcements on 2021 national assessments. Primary pupils in year 6 will continue to sit SATs next May. Secondary pupils in year 11 and 13 will sit GCSE and A Level (or equivalent) examinations as planned next summer. However, there will be some significant additional changes such as more generous awarding of grades in line with 2020, extra help regarding the materials pupils can take into examinations and more forewarning about some specific examination content. We welcome all of these changes to support our pupils who have faced significant disruption due to Covid-19 and shown the most remarkable resilience throughout.

We are currently taking on-board all of these changes and awaiting further detailed guidance which is due in January. We will adjust our plans as necessary to ensure pupils receive the best support we can provide. Your child's teachers will update pupils with more details at the start of the Spring Term and the Principal of your child's academy will provide more guidance to you as parents and carers in due course.

Lastly, can I emphasise once more our gratitude for all of your parental support over the last few months. We have received lots of positive feedback and well-wishes and I cannot overemphasise how much this has been valued by staff. Knowing that you are urging us on and wishing us well means such a great deal. I hope you all enjoy a happy and safe Christmas. We look forward to welcoming all pupils back to school at the start of the Spring Term in January 2021.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'S Beamish', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

**Simon Beamish**  
**Chief Executive**