

18 September 2020

Dear Parents and Carers

## **Recent Outbreaks of the Covid 19 Virus 2020**

I would like to start by thanking you for continuing to support your children through some difficult times and although schools reopened fully earlier this month there were further changes to routines for both parents and children. One of these changes was the creation of bubbles or groups of children which reduces the possible spread of the virus. The size of bubbles varies in different schools and this is in line with guidance from the Government. Smaller bubbles are possible in some Primary schools whereas larger bubbles have been necessary in many Secondary schools to enable older children to access the full range of subjects. Whilst we hoped that the start of this term would be closer to normal, it has become clear in the last few days that this sense of normality would not continue.

Over recent days, outbreaks of the virus have occurred across many areas of Sandwell, and following advice from Public Health Advisers, a significant number of schools are now sending groups or bubbles of children home to self-isolate for several days. We appreciate that these situations can be very challenging for both children and parents, but it is important to realise that schools are following the guidance provided by Government through our Public Health team.

We know the decision to send children home has a massive impact on many of you and places pressures around childcare. The current restrictions in Sandwell mean that children cannot be sent to other family members' homes so it may be difficult to look after your children if they are sent home. We hope local employers will be sympathetic to this situation if you need to be at home to look after your children.

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**Chris Ward, Director of Education, Skills and Employment**  
**EDUCATION, SKILLS AND EMPLOYMENT DIRECTORATE**  
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During the last week, we are aware that a small minority of parents and carers have unfortunately taken out their frustrations on schools and staff through social media. Whilst we are all disappointed that normal routines are again disrupted through the increase in the number of confirmed cases, I would like to remind all parents and carers that schools have no alternatives in these situations as they are following national guidance. I would also ask that parents and carers observe the same national guidance on self-isolation and testing in order to prevent any further outbreaks in schools and communities. If your child has COVID symptoms then they cannot go to school.

School staff are working hard to deliver normal lessons as well as organising remote learning for children and young people who are not in school. Your schools may already have written to you to explain how they will be reinstating remote learning if this is needed and this will differ from school to school.

Following the sharp rise in confirmed cases the Government confirmed Sandwell as an Area of Intervention on Friday 11 September with additional restrictions in place to try to reduce the spread of the virus. Can I therefore please ask that you continue to support your school and its staff, particularly when there is an outbreak of the virus confirmed. By following the national guidance and working together, we may be able to reduce the spread of the virus and avoid further disruption to your children's education in the coming months.

Thank you for your support and assistance during these difficult times.

Yours sincerely



Chris Ward  
**Director of Education, Skills and Employment**

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