



Dear Varndean families

As confirmed COVID case rates among younger children rise in Brighton and Hove I am writing to update you on the current situation in school.

As was predicted by public health officials, the return to school has seen COVID infections steadily rise and Varndean School is no exception to this. Reassuringly our school based LFD testing, and that carried out by our families at home, is identifying the asymptomatic cases and families are being vigilant in booking PCR tests when their children exhibit symptoms or have been contacted by NHS track and trace. Our analysis of the case data doesn't show spikes in particular tutor groups or class groups at present suggesting that our collective effort to keep COVID out of school has had a positive impact so far.

However, infections have risen and currently a little over 5% of students are self isolating due to a recent diagnosis. As I indicated to you previously, I have committed to take action when infections reach this level even though the guidance says no action is necessary until the infection figure is at 10%. My aim will be to maintain student and staff safety while ensuring continuity of education, which is the approach we have taken throughout the pandemic.

With this in mind, we are implementing the following extra measures from Monday until we see cases fall back below 5%:

- Assemblies will now be virtual to reduce mass gatherings
- Students will be encouraged to go outside at break and lunchtime
- Everyone will be asked to wear a face covering queuing for the canteen and inside the canteen

Should rates continue to rise then further protective measures will be necessary and these will include staggering lunchtimes and designating areas for particular year groups at lunchtime to reduce mixing. In addition, face coverings will be required in all communal areas.

I will of course keep families informed in general terms about case rates and any changes to the protective measures we are introducing. I will also let families of particular classes, where there seem to be spikes in cases, know so that you can further test your child as a precautionary measure.





It is of course important that we continue with the basics of our approach for the time being as we all adapt to life with Covid. Twice weekly testing on Sunday and Wednesday is vital so please continue to do this and upload [your testing here](#). In addition, please continue to remind your children to practice good hand hygiene and meet friends outside wherever possible.

I would like to thank you in advance for your support of this approach and for reading the continued information regarding Covid safety - we are not quite at the end yet! I know that it will require continued work from you to reassure your children and help them understand that learning to live with COVID requires some sacrifice from us all. Throughout the pandemic our joint effort has been effective in keeping families safe and maintaining education. These steps should be seen as a continuation of our belief that *together* we can make this work for our whole community.

Kind regards

Shelley Baker