



# Alameda Middle School

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## COVID Update

### End of term and Contact Tracing up to 24th December

**Face coverings for year 7, year 8 and all adults around school to be worn from January**

14<sup>th</sup> December 2020

Dear parents and carers,

As we reach the end of term, there are two important updates regarding COVID-19 procedures that I wanted to share.

### End of Term and Contact Tracing Up to 24th December

Public Health England have agreed a 6-day window after the final day of teaching in which schools and further education providers are asked to remain contactable so they can assist with contact tracing where necessary. This will allow enough time for positive coronavirus (COVID-19) cases to be identified and confirmed by a test and for relevant contacts in the education setting to be traced.

Schools have been asked to ensure staff, parents and carers are aware of the following information and relevant arrangements regarding positive cases in the holidays:

**For the first 6 days after teaching ends, if a pupil or staff member tests positive for coronavirus (COVID-19), having developed symptoms within 48 hours of being in school, the school is asked to assist in identifying close contacts and advising self-isolation, as the individual may have been infectious whilst in school.**

We have set up a dedicated email address for parents and carers to contact if a child who attends Alameda tests positive after developing symptoms within 48 hours of the end of term. For most, this would mean developing symptoms up to 4pm on Sunday 20th December.

Parents/carers should email [covid@alamedamiddleschool.org.uk](mailto:covid@alamedamiddleschool.org.uk) giving details of when symptoms developed, when the child was tested and a contact number in case we need to contact you.

This email will be monitored daily between 9am and 10am until the 24th December. If any positive cases are reported, we will then inform all those we believe to be close contacts, which in most cases will be the class bubble. All close contacts will then need to self-isolate for 10 days from the day they last had contact with the infected person.

The guidance goes on to clarify:

**Where a pupil or staff member tests positive for coronavirus (COVID-19), having developed symptoms more than 48 hours since being in school, the school should not be contacted. Parents and carers should follow contact tracing instructions provided by NHS Test and Trace.**

When the DfE announced this on Monday, they gave schools the option to close a day early so that admin and school leaders would only have to do this up to 23rd December and not up to Christmas Eve.

Like most other schools in the Ampthill/Flitwick area, we felt that it was too short notice to advise of a closure day on the 18th and therefore our term dates will remain the same – our last day of school will be Friday 18th December and we welcome children back on Tuesday 5th January.

### **Face Coverings in communal areas for years 7 and 8 and staff and visitors from January 5th**

Back in the summer, when planning for full opening, we considered the use of face coverings. The guidance remains similar in this respect:

The [World Health Organisation published a statement about children and face coverings](#). They advise that “children aged 12 and over should wear a mask under the same conditions as adults, in particular when they cannot guarantee at least a 1metre distance from others and there is widespread transmission in the area.”

Nationwide, the government is not recommending face coverings are necessary in education settings generally because a system of controls, applicable to all education environments, provides additional mitigating measures. Schools and colleges will have the discretion to require face coverings in indoor communal areas where social distancing cannot be safely managed if they believe that it is right in their particular circumstances.

Examples of where education leaders might decide to recommend the wearing of face coverings - for pupils, staff and visitors - in communal areas of the education setting include:

- where the layout of the school or college estate makes it particularly difficult to maintain social distancing when staff and pupils are moving around the premises
- where on top of hygiene measures and the system of controls recommended in the full [opening guidance to schools](#) and [FE colleges and providers](#), permitting the use of face coverings for staff, pupils or other visitors would provide additional confidence to parents to support a full return of children to school or college.

Full guidance can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/face-coverings-in-education/face-coverings-in-education>

We have felt, overall, that our other systems in place meant that face coverings were not necessary even outside classrooms. More recent feedback, however, has been that this is something we should reconsider. It was advised following our report of a recent case and as school leaders, we believe since introducing more movement, such as to use DT facilities, science labs, with children going

out to the toilets, it is now appropriate to ask for **staff, visitors and pupils in years 7 and 8 to wear face coverings in communal areas from 5th January.**

We have opted for introducing this at the start of term to allow us to communicate and prepare pupils. There is a guidance document attached advising on the safe use of face coverings and also explaining the reasons they are used. This will also be discussed in community time both before the break and in January. We will be discussing this in community time to make sure the children understand the reasons and also where they will wear masks and how to take them off/put them on and store them.

Pupils in years 7 and 8 will need to bring a sealable plastic bag to store their mask in when it is not being worn. We also understand that some children will be exempt from wearing a mask. I ask that you contact your child's form tutor if you believe this to be the case. We will have a stock of disposable masks for pupils who lose or forget theirs but ask please that you support us by providing a mask at home. As with all new items, please could face coverings provided be as plain as possible.

Pupils in years 5 and 6 may wear face coverings too if they choose. The community time sessions on face coverings are being done by all year groups this week and will be revisited again in January.

As always, we appreciate that this change will be greeted with mixed views. As with all decisions, I would like to reassure you that changes are made following consultation with our health and safety advisor, following the government guidance and with careful consideration of what, as school leaders and with the backing of governors we, feel is in the best interests of our school community.

Thank you for your support.

Yours sincerely



Miss M Warner

Headteacher