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Monday 2nd November 2020

Dear parents and carers,

RE: the Prime Minister's recent announcement on a second national lockdown in England.

You will have seen reports over the weekend about increased Covid lockdown restrictions which take effect this Thursday. This second lockdown will be different to the first in respect of schools which will remain open to all pupils full-time. Leigh Academies Trust (LAT) agrees with the strongly-held view of all of the major UK political parties that it is vital for pupils to continue to attend school. Not doing so is more harmful than the risks posed by Covid to their education and future life chances.

Towards the end of last half-term, pupil attendance across LAT's twenty-eight schools was running at about 95% daily. This was significantly higher than the national average which by that stage had fallen below 90%. We are hugely grateful for your support as parents and carers to ensure children are not missing out on their education over this difficult period. Whilst we experienced a small number of Covid cases last half-term, none of these were as a result of virus transmission within one of our schools; all cases resulted from Covid being caught outside of school. Our highly effective enhanced safety arrangements in school are keeping everyone safe.

My letter to you dated 17th September set out for parents what you should do if you suspect that your child has Covid symptoms or has been in contact with someone who has tested positive for the virus. As much as we appreciate your efforts to send your child to school every day, we also value your vigilance to watch out for signs of Covid within your own family and close contacts so that the virus is not brought into school. As we enter the second national lockdown period throughout November this vigilance will become even more important; there is certainly no room for complacency.

Last half-term, many of our secondary academies began implementing a face mask policy for pupils, staff and visitors. From this Thursday at the latest, to coincide with the start of the second lockdown, all of our secondary academies will implement such a policy. Your child's Principal will update you about this shortly if they haven't already done so. In our primaries and special academies, our face mask policy will apply to staff and visitors only. Children will not be expected to wear a face mask unless they wish to do so in line with the latest advice from the government.

Lastly, you will know that all of our academies put in place from the start of September much enhanced and unapologetically strict arrangements to create Covid-secure learning environments, going above and beyond government guidance. These systems have gone extremely well and are being constantly adapted and refined to keep up with the latest situation on the ground and ongoing feedback from a range of stakeholders. Your child's Principal will keep you up-to-date with any changes as they occur and will be in contact with you shortly about priorities for the weeks that lead up to Christmas.

Yours faithfully,

Simon Beamish
Chief Executive