



# Larwood Academy Trust

**Executive Headteacher:** Mr Sean Trimble | B.Ed (Hons) MA NPQH |

**Chair of Trustees:** Cllr Sandra Barr | B.Sc (Hons) Dip.soc.pol |

WEBB RISE, STEVENAGE, HERTFORDSHIRE, SG1 5QU

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## Larwood School

## Brandles School

**Deputy Headteacher:** Mr Pierre Van Der Merwe | BA, NPQH |

**Headteacher:** Mr David Pearce | BA (Hons), PGCE, NPQH |

Friday, 22<sup>nd</sup> January 2021

Dear Parents/Carers

I hope this letter finds you and your families well. As per previous weeks, I write to update you matters related to the current pandemic and our Trust approach.

We hope that during the course of next week, Larwood School will receive home based Covid testing kits for staff. Staff will then test themselves, twice per week following the guidance provided. Whilst this is not as strong a process as I would like (I actually want daily testing just as Care Home staff currently do), it is better than having no testing at all. Just like Brandles, staff will complete tests twice per week and three/four days apart. The difference between the two schools is that Brandles have their testing processes taking place in school and they have been running since the start of the term. This will help us identify any staff member who may have Covid and/or be asymptomatic.

In order to help us all with potential levels of anxiety connected to the 'what ifs.. .' that many of you, and our pupils may be thinking, I am sharing this information with you today. ***Our position, as a Trust, will remain the same as now until the first week back after half term. That date being Friday 26th Feb.*** It seems highly unlikely that we will be at odds with the rest of the nation, but this decision has been reached with the following in mind:

- Both schools currently have small cohorts attending, which is the most direct way of reducing risk at a time when infection/death rates remain incredibly worrying
- I am reviewing infection rates data daily/weekly to make such decisions, but our picture is not that straight forward. At the time of writing the daily infection rate for England was 449.8/100k population, with Stevenage being 568.4/100k population and Baldock being 564.8/100k population. However, even this data is not truly reflective for us as we have pupils and families, dotted across various parts of North East Hertfordshire/Essex/Bedford. All schools have staff that travel to work. Rates of infection in October were around 150/100k of population and in December during the last week of term, it had risen to numbers in the 300's/100k of population.
- There may well be small variations to those attending school due to levels of vulnerability and the impact on certain family situations over time
- Both schools will maintain a rota system for the vast majority of staff
- This gives a degree of clarity for the next 5 weeks, at which point, I genuinely hope we can start to discuss the next phase of having more pupils physically back at school. This is likely to be a similar approach to the previous lockdown whereby designated cohorts and staff are in on certain days and this leads to a more consistent blended learning program for the vast

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majority of pupils. However, this will only take place when infection/death rates have stabilised and this may/may not be the case by the date shared in this email.

- Just as before, where you do not want their child attending, we will respect this stance. We will continue to communicate with you frequently to check your view on attendance and your child's current access to provision. Where situations alter we will be able to make changes to those attending and those who are not, but this will not be on a large scale.
- We will continue to develop our approaches to online learning and for those pupils experiencing a blended approach to provision

Just like you, I continue to want to return to all pupils being back at school as soon as possible. However, my responsibility to all parties within our schools means that a slow and gradual approach to change, being very mindful of infection rates etc. will still drive our stance. We will get there and in the meantime, we will work as hard as possible to provide the best provision possible in the challenging circumstances that currently affect us all.

I know, via direct feedback that so many of you agree with such a slow and cautious approach to the pandemic and any changes. It is incredibly frustrating for us all and I greatly appreciate your ongoing support with this matter.

Yours sincerely

S D Trimble

Executive Headteacher

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