



23 November 2020

Dear parents and carers

I am writing to you this evening because since March I have always said that I would communicate with you openly and honestly about the impact the Covid 19 pandemic is having on our school community and the decisions we make as a result. Those decisions will always be made in the interests of your children and making sure they are, above all else, safe and able to receive the high standard of education they are entitled to.

In the last two days we have had two confirmed Covid 19 cases in our school community. One is a staff member and one is a student. As a result of these two cases I have had to inform 100 students that they need to isolate. I have also had to give the same message to 17 staff, all of whom are devastated. When you add to these 17 colleagues, the staff who are currently shielding on medical advice and the others who are isolating having been contacted by Test and Trace it is clear to see that we are missing a lot of teachers.

I have spent the last two hours since school closed today, checking we have enough staff to open fully for the remainder of this week. I am pleased to report that we can remain fully open, but only just. The reason we can remain open is that staff have agreed to cover lessons in all their non-contact time and some part time staff have agreed to come in to school on their day off. We are therefore able to ensure that all students are being taught by Longdean teachers, rather than external supply staff and we are not going against our own reopening guidelines contained in our risk assessment. As always I am grateful to the staff for their professionalism and willingness to go above and beyond for the students. I do feel however, that you need to hear directly from me how challenging things are at the moment and how close we are to having to partially close the school. I will review the situation at the end of each day but if we have further cases we will have to consider moving to a rota system for students. We have had a plan in place for this since June when we reopened. I hope we do not have to implement it but at the moment it is possible.

I also wanted to inform you of some additional changes we are having to make to ensure we have capacity to remain fully open until the end of term. For the remainder of this week students in Pathway 2 in Year 9 will have some of their classes collapsed due to only having small numbers left in them. They will be taught collectively in the main hall as per their timetable. Students will be informed of this tomorrow. The Art examination that started today will be concluded tomorrow.

We have also decided that Year 11 students will be on study leave for the period of their GCSE Preliminary Examinations. Ms Levesley will write to you separately about this and will talk to students in their assembly on Thursday. We had already considered study leave for this set of examinations and for those in March in order to more closely replicate the examination period. In short, these arrangements mean that for the two weeks beginning 30th November and 7th December students only need to be in school for their examinations or for their option lessons on Tuesday and Friday. We will of course ensure that students in receipt of free school meals are provided with vouchers to purchase lunches whilst on study leave. After school sessions will also continue to run via Teams.

Rumballs Road

Main School: 01442 217277

Hemel Hempstead

Fax: 01442 233098

Hertfordshire

admin@longdean.herts.sch.uk

Pupil Absence please call

Year 7: 01442 205758

Year 8: 01442 205706

Year 9: 01442 205703

Year 10: 01442 205760

Year 11: 01442 205707

Year 12: 01442 205720

Social Media:

PE: [@LongdeanPE](#)

Science: [@LongdeanScience](#)

History: [@LongdeanHistory](#)

Film Studies: [@LongdeanFilm](#)



These are unprecedented times in education and whilst we are trying to think strategically and stay ahead of events we will occasionally have to think on our feet and respond to events as they unfold. This week is one such occasion. I hope parents and students understand why we have made these decisions and as always I thank you for your ongoing and unwavering support.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Graham Cunningham', written in a cursive style.

Graham Cunningham
Headteacher
Longdean School