

Friday 10th December 2021

Dear parents

I am writing to you at the end of a very busy but more positive week. Kingswood is as of yesterday fully open again. Thank you to all those parents who supported my decisions throughout the partial closure of the school. We do seem to have been able to curb the spread of positive cases. I understand that there is still anxiety about sending the children to school, however attendance is still mandatory and although I have agreed to authorise the rest of this week, any further absences will not be authorised. The only cases we have had this week have occurred where children have been isolating as other family members tested positive, and these children have not been in school since before we closed Birch and Oak classes.

This week I am writing to you regarding Plan B, the use of lateral flow tests for visitors, parents and pupils, the vouchers for children who are in receipt of free school meals and a go fund me fundraising opportunity for defibrillators.

#### Plan B

I have received an email from the DFE with some additional guidelines, I have also attended a government briefing yesterday. Below are the main points and changes to our procedure:

- All staff will be wearing face masks in communal areas.
- All Aspire schools are only having visitors which are vital to the education or safety of the children, parents are asked to communicate with the school via phone or email.
- Visitors to the school will be asked to take a lateral flow test before entering the building.
- Attendance at schools remains mandatory, nobody is being asked to shield so everyone should continue to attend school.
- Wrap around care at Kingswood and Leeds and Broomfield can continue to allow working parents to continue to work.
- Staff will continue to lateral flow test twice a week, even over the holidays.
- OFSTED will not be carrying out inspections next week, but will restart in January.
- Schools will remain open and fully functional even though people are being asked to work from home. All school staff are key workers who will continue to come into work.

#### Lateral Flow tests

The government has asked schools to strongly encourage the use of lateral flow tests for visitors into schools. If you as parents have an appointment in any of the Aspire schools we will be asking you to take a lateral flow test. We would also ask you to test your children if they are under the weather or if anyone in your household tests positive. I think what has happened at Kingswood has shown us just how fast it can spread so we need to work together to prevent it as far as we can, please.

All other visitors will be asked to take a lateral flow test if they have to come into the building, this includes contractors, medical and other professional visitors. Again this is to try and prevent the bringing of the virus into our schools.



### Vouchers for children in receipt of Free School Meals

Before the end of term, those children who receive benefits related free school meals will receive three vouchers.

Supermarket vouchers - you will receive £15 per child per week of the holidays so that is £30 per child for the two week Christmas holidays.

Bus Pass - each family will receive a bus pass which can be used by two adults and two children or one adult and three children on buses around Kent for the duration of the school holidays. These passes will be sent out via Wonde the same place as the supermarket vouchers. Here is the information from KCC:

### **Free bus pass for families this Christmas!**

Kent's bus companies have also said they want to help families Reconnect this Christmas and have kindly offered to provide free bus travel for families who receive income-related free school meals, and to those taking up *Free for 2* nursery places. These can be used by either:

- one adult and up to three children, or
- two adults and up to two children.

One of the vouchers you receive is your link to your electronic family bus pass. You can simply download it to your phone or transfer it to your partner for them to download to theirs.

### **How to use your bus pass**

- You can use your electronic bus pass from Saturday 18 December until and including Monday 3 January.
- You need to show your electronic bus pass to the driver.
- You need to travel as a family (at least one adult and one child).
- You can use it for journeys throughout the day, and for evening journeys that start before 8pm.
- You can use it to travel within KCC's boundaries, but not beyond (i.e., in neighbouring authorities - Medway, Sussex, Surrey or the London Boroughs of Bromley or Bexley).
- You can transfer the pass to one other adult within your family, but this will deactivate the pass for you. You will not be able to transfer passes to another family.
- You can use your pass on the services provided by the following operators:
  - Arriva
  - Chalkwell
  - Go Coach
  - Nu-Venture
  - Stagecoach

Holiday activity voucher - the third voucher you will receive is a voucher which enables the children to take part in activity over the Christmas holidays. Here is the information from KCC.

### **Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) Programme**

**Free** exciting, enriching activities for children and young people during the school holidays, with healthy, nutritious food – that's what the HAF Programme in Kent offers to children eligible for income-related free school meals. It also supports their physical and mental health and wellbeing. Children aged 4 to 16 years, who are eligible for free school meals, can access these opportunities in the Easter, Summer, and Christmas holidays for **free**.



This Christmas, alongside the normal offer, we have been able to fund HAF providers to take participating children on a trip, such as to the Panto or an ice rink, with both the cost of entry and travel covered by the programme.

The other good news is that HAF is here to stay. In his budget statement the Chancellor confirmed funding for the HAF Programme to continue for the next three financial years. Why not give it a try this Christmas?

The third voucher you will receive will enable you to find out where your local HAF Activities are happening, to contact the provider, and to let them know your child is eligible for a free place.

#### Go fund me - defibrillators for schools

This week we received an email about a Maidstone project which aims to fund a defibrillator for every Maidstone school - the details are below if you are interested in donating.

As ever please contact me at [exehead@aspire-kent.org.uk](mailto:exehead@aspire-kent.org.uk) if you have any queries. Wishing you all a pleasant family weekend as you prepare for Christmas.

Take care and stay safe,  
Kind regards,

**Emma Hickling**  
**Executive Headteacher**  
**Aspire Federation**



#### **MAIDSTONE LIONS PROJECT TO ENSURE EVERY MAIDSTONE SCHOOL HAS A DEFIBRILLATOR**



Maidstone Lions have launched a project that they hope will result in every school in Maidstone having at least one defibrillator. A recent survey of schools in Maidstone revealed that approximately one third do not have a defibrillator. While of those that do, another third may have just one machine on a large campus, where really two or three are needed.

It is a sad fact that every week in the UK, 12 young people under the age of 35 die from Sudden Arrhythmic Death Syndrome (SADS), many of these deaths take place in a school setting.

The use of a defibrillator significantly improves the chance of survival, in fact use of a defibrillator within one minute of a Cardiac Arrest improves the chance of survival by 90%, decreasing by 10% with every minute that passes. Research by the Club has revealed that there have been cases of SADS in Maidstone schools in the recent years, some of which were adults.

Lions are looking to raise £65,000 to fund defibrillators and training. Their first aim is that every school has one defibrillator, then to increase the number of defibrillators in schools that have a need for more. Unfortunately, this is not something that the club can do on their own and we are looking for community support for the success of the project. The Club are starting the fund with an injection of £15,000 and, in addition, every penny raised at our annual street collection in Week Street, Maidstone Town Centre on 18<sup>th</sup> December will be added to the fund. We hope that people will support the project and spread the word through social media and word of mouth

Donations to the fund can be made via GoFundMe:

<https://gofund.me/46b80d7e>

For further information please email [welfare@maidstonelions.org.uk](mailto:welfare@maidstonelions.org.uk)

Or see our website [www.maidstonelions.org.uk](http://www.maidstonelions.org.uk)