

12 October 2020

Dear Parent / Guardian

I am writing to you in response to the rising [local prevalence](#) of Covid-19, as there are now confirmed positive cases in the Yeovil area. Fortunately, we have not yet had an identified positive case amongst Westfield students or staff, but I fear it is inevitable that this will occur at some point.

We will follow the guidance from the Department for Education and Public Health England in response to a case of Covid-19 within our school. Please ensure that you have provided up to date contact details, as we will use our texting service to keep you informed as soon as we are authorised to do so by the Department for Education, in the event of a confirmed case.

On our website, we have [work](#) for individual students to carry out whilst isolating that is updated daily. In the event of a class or year group being required to isolate, those students will follow their timetables with live support from their teachers utilising their chromebooks.

Across the country, during lockdown, the impact on children and families of school closures made clear the vital importance of face-to-face schooling and a recognition of the wider support, beyond academic development, that schools provide. It is vital that schools are open and I want to reiterate again that the risk to children from Covid-19 is extremely small.

However, the risk to Westfield Academy staff and vulnerable adults in the community is significant and with prevalence rising locally, the school's role in preventing transmission in our community is now an essential part of our work. Also, we have parents who work in care homes, or YDH, and families whose income could be affected by a local lockdown. Westfield Academy is the largest secondary school in the local area, and as such the largest organisation working without social distancing or PPE, as directed by the national guidance for schools.

We have rigorously followed the national guidance in creating class bubbles at KS3 and year group bubbles at KS4. We are ensuring in excess of 9000 handwashes a day and sanitising key areas of the site daily. We have installed ventilated breaktime [shelters](#) for students. We have ensured staff can maintain 2 metre distancing from students, and each other, and have limited visitors to our site.

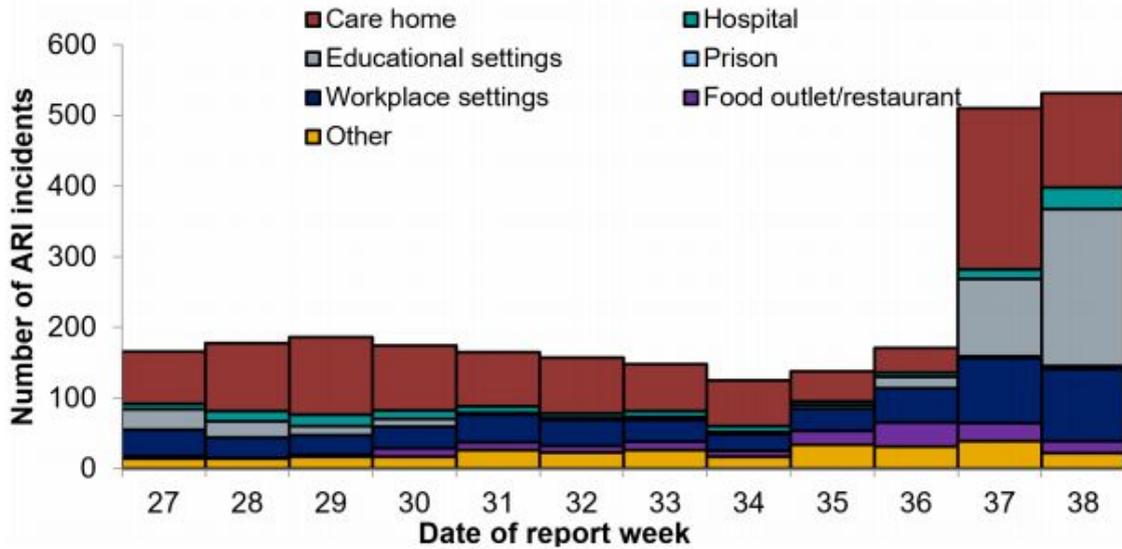
The element of the guidance that is going to become the most challenging to maintain as we move into winter is adequate ventilation. We had anticipated this before the summer, adapting our uniform to allow the wearing of coats in class. Crowded, enclosed, and poorly ventilated spaces have led to examples of transmission and so called "super spreader" events. In the last week, the American Centre for Disease Control updated their [guidance](#) to include aerosol transmission.

Before I discuss in detail how we intend to mitigate the conflicting demands of ventilation and maintaining temperatures in the classrooms, I want to share with you data that will give an indication of how important it is that we recognise the significant role schools are having on the progress of this pandemic.



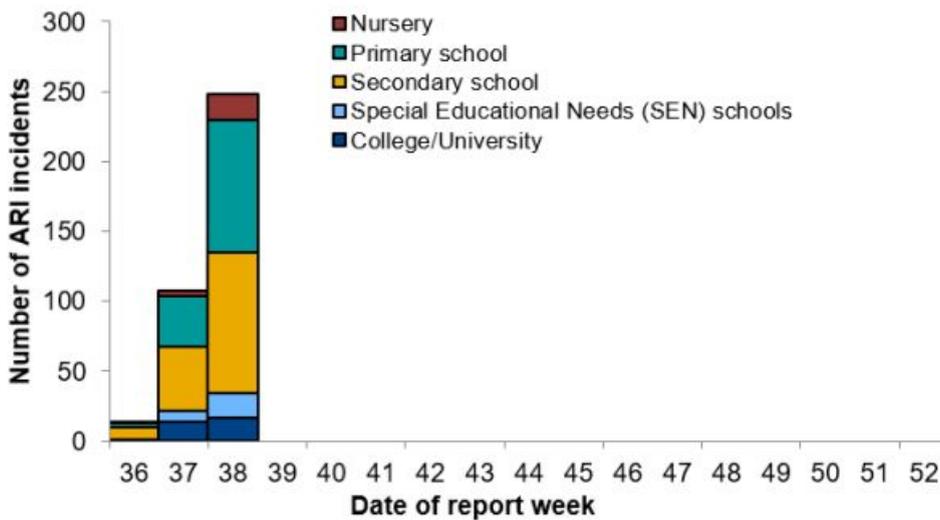
Recent Public Health England [data](#) on Covid-19 outbreaks makes it clear that despite national publicity around hospitality venues, outbreaks are most commonly occurring in educational establishments.

Figure 20: Number of COVID-19 incidents by institution from week 27, England



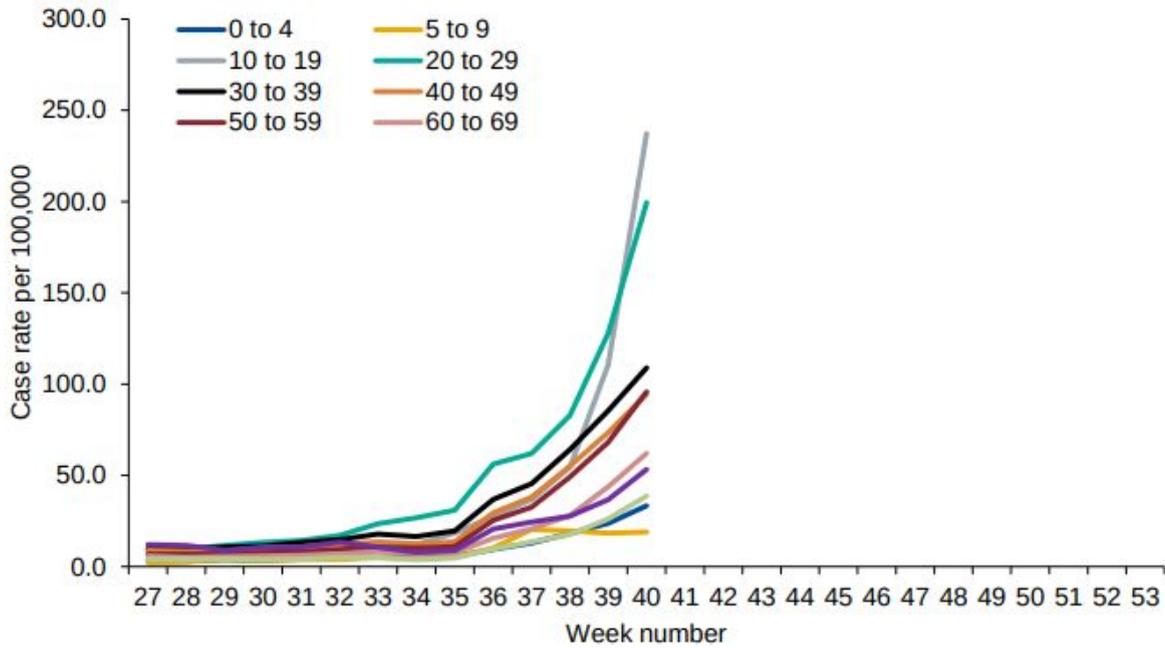
This data is unsurprising given that schools have no social distancing between students in classrooms and that children have been [shown](#) to transmit Covid-19, especially when of secondary age. A breakdown of the outbreaks in the educational settings is below.

Figure 21: Number of COVID-19 confirmed clusters or outbreaks by type of educational setting, England



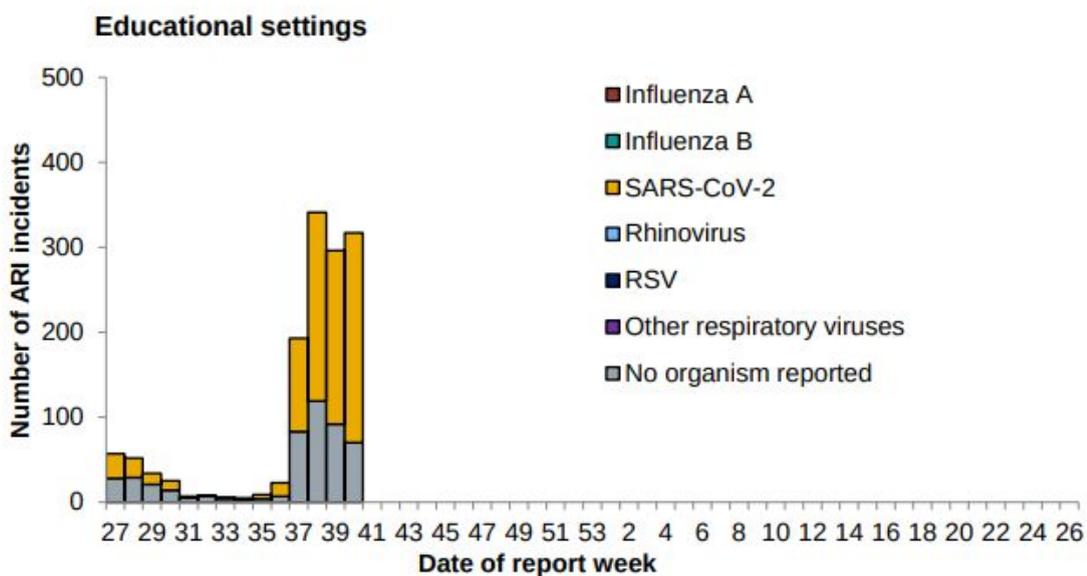
The latest data shows the age group category of 10 -19 have the fastest rising case rate.

Figure 4: Weekly laboratory confirmed COVID-19 case rates per 100,000, tested under Pillar 1 and Pillar 2 , by age group



We have [asked](#) that students who are poorly are kept at home. This is now even more important, as since September the proportion of children nationally who have respiratory infections that have subsequently been identified as Covid-19 (SARS-CoV-2) has risen dramatically.

Figure 18: Number of acute respiratory infection (ARI) in educational settings by virus type from week 27, England



Given that crowded, enclosed, and poorly ventilated spaces are a key risk for transmission of Covid-19 and that we cannot adjust the crowded or enclosed elements, that only leaves us with increasing ventilation.

The [purpose](#) of this increased ventilation is to reduce the concentration of aerosolised virus particles, a reduced concentration will lead to lower risk of transmission and possibly, [less severe cases of Covid-19](#) when it is transmitted.

Whilst ambient temperatures permit, we will have the windows wide open to maximise ventilation. In order to maintain this level of ventilation for as long as possible, we have the school heating on at maximum, we are asking that all students have a coat every day, that they wear extra thermal layers, and if possible, that students bring in a blanket to put over their laps. Students in years 7-9 can leave their blanket in school as they have their own classroom. We will also review the uniform code to support this policy.

We are starting to map the temperatures of classrooms, internal temperatures are dependent on a particular classroom and its heating and insulation. The tipping point where cold air can make the mucosal membrane in the respiratory tract more likely to be susceptible to infection by rhinoviruses (common cold), flu and coronaviruses is [approximately below 10C](#).

With classrooms on particular days, where they are at risk of falling below 10C, we will have to mandate that students wear face coverings in lessons in these particular classrooms, in order to mitigate reducing the ventilation to increase the temperature. The teaching staff will not have to wear a face covering and can continue to teach as normal. Face coverings [reduce the production of aerosol particles. but do not significantly stop them entering the airways](#), hence we would recommend them for students but they would not be needed for staff, especially as they can inhibit the ability to make teaching understood.

With the mitigations of increased clothing, blankets, and face coverings worn whilst in particular classrooms when temperatures drop, we hope to be able to navigate what will be a challenging winter in the midst of a pandemic and protect our community. We have worked together to successfully deliver education to this point and now need to do so to protect the vulnerable in our community and the local NHS, alongside our core role in providing education..

Yours faithfully



Mr S Dallimore
Headteacher