



# Le Cateau

## Community Primary School

3<sup>rd</sup> January 2021

### RE: Update regarding start of Spring Term 2021

Dear Parents and Carers,

I apologise that I am writing to you at such short notice, given that the start of the new school term begins tomorrow with pupils set to return on Tuesday (5<sup>th</sup> January) however, there has been a lot of coverage in the media regarding what may or may not happen regarding all schools.

I also apologise that I am currently unable to give the certainty of a definitive plan for Tuesday and for the forthcoming weeks, however, I think it is important to openly share the current situation regarding the pupils return for the Spring Term with you. **I will send a further letter as early as possible to confirm our plans and hope that this can happen by the end of today (Sunday 3<sup>rd</sup> January) or by the end of Monday morning at the latest.**

On Wednesday 30<sup>th</sup> December the **government** announced that primary schools in some Tier 4 areas would be instructed to undertake online learning with their children for the first two weeks of this term. These areas, were identified within the **DfE's (Department for Education)** "Contingency Framework" and included some London boroughs and some surrounding counties but not North Yorkshire.

Following this national announcement, we have been closely monitoring the situation and have checked the ever-growing increase in cases across the country and within Richmondshire. On Friday (1<sup>st</sup> January), the **DfE** updated their guidance, following health concerns raised by some local councils, to include all London boroughs and implemented a "Contingency Framework". This framework can be viewed here: [DfE Contingency Framework](#)

On Saturday (2<sup>nd</sup> January), a number of leadership and teacher **Unions** shared their concerns with both the government and their members and questioned why primary schools in some Tier 4 areas were being instructed to undertake at least two weeks of remote learning and others were being instructed to start in person learning from Monday 4<sup>th</sup> January. You can read their views and comments with these links:

[NAHT \(National Association of Headteachers\)](#)

[NEU \(National Education Union\)](#)

[NASUWT](#)

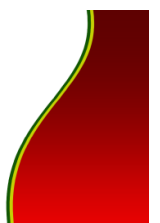
The **government** recognise that:

*"Evidence shows the new strain of COVID-19 is increasing across the country. The majority of the cases identified in London, the South East and the East of England are of the new variant. Infection rates have increased faster than expected in these areas where the new strain has been circulating and stronger measures are required to get the virus under control."* (DfE Contingency Framework)

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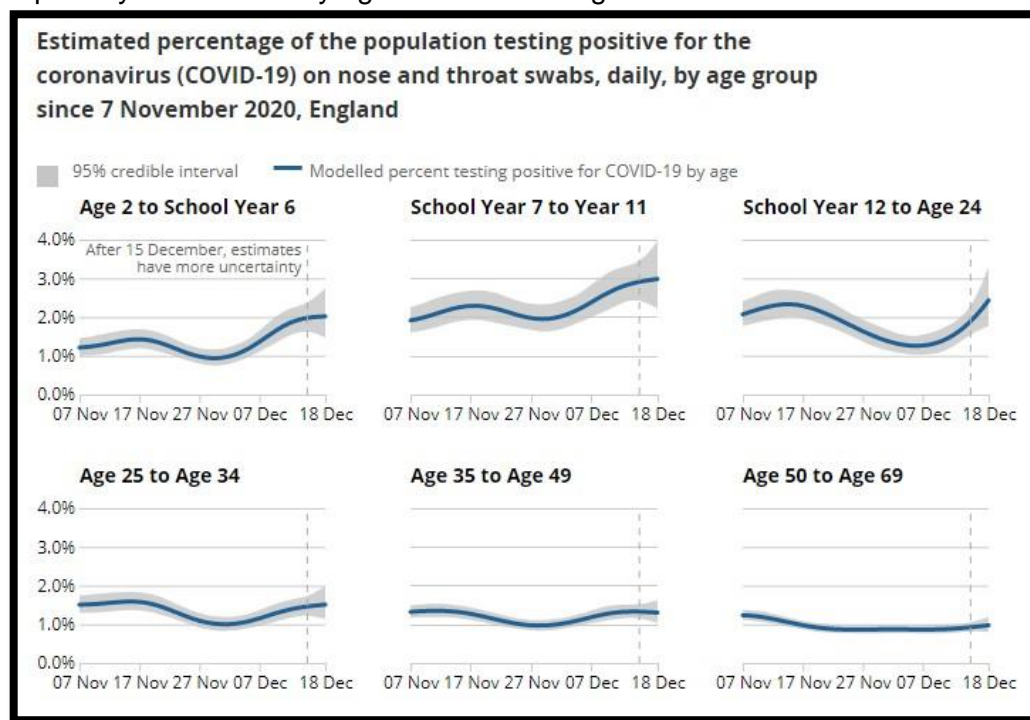
The minutes from a **SAGE** meeting on the 22<sup>nd</sup> December 2020 which informs the government's decision making stated:

*"It is highly unlikely that measures with stringency and adherence in line with the measures in England in November (i.e. with schools open) would be sufficient to maintain R below 1 in the presence of the new variant. R would be lower with schools closed."*

The minutes from this meeting can be viewed here:

[SAGE meeting 22.12.2020](#)

The **Office for National Statistics** shared data that shows that rates of Covid-19 positive cases were rising in primary and secondary aged children during December:



[ONS Covid-19 survey 24.12.2020](#)

### **Why am I telling you this?**

I am sharing this information to be open with you as families about the position schools and school leaders are in at this time with regards important decisions. I will continue to monitor the national and North Yorkshire guidance and updates throughout today and am meeting with Senior Leaders later this afternoon to discuss our plans.

Although I cannot confirm our final plans yet **I foresee 3 likely options:**

1. The national and North Yorkshire instructions do not change, and all children are back in class full time from Tuesday 5<sup>th</sup> January.
2. The national and North Yorkshire instructions do not change, but some Le Cateau staff decide not to attend school in person due to health and safety concerns. **This is their legal right as employees** if they choose to do so, and one that will have my full understanding and support. This would lead to a situation where some classes might be in school learning in person and some classes learning remotely at home. For clarification both the DfE and the Unions are only proposing this initially for the first two weeks of term. Also during this time I would show the same full understanding and support for any families who choose to keep their children home for remote learning during this same time period.
3. The national and / or North Yorkshire instructions change and North Yorkshire schools are instructed to provide Remote Learning.

Again, I apologise that I am currently unable to give the certainty of a definitive plan from Tuesday and over the coming weeks, however, as previously mentioned I will send a further letter as early as possible this evening/Monday morning to confirm our plans.

Myself and the staff at Le Cateau fully support the DfE's view that consistency of learning is vital for children, and we recognise that the relationships and routines associated with schools supporting children's wellbeing.

Any potential changes to our plans are not linked to unsafe practices at Le Cateau, both staff and parents view the actions we have taken as a school to minimise the risk of Covid transmission as highly effective. The concerns being raised are due to the rise in numbers of positive cases both locally and nationally and the position this places all members of the school community in.

As I have stated throughout:

*"I can assure you we will continue to work carefully and to keep reviewing our procedures throughout 2021, to make the safety of everyone in our community our first priority."*

This may involve more staff wearing visors and/or masks in classrooms or us requesting that children in the older classes wear masks when moving around inside the school. Any changes that we undertake will be communicated to you in as timely a manner as possible.

In conclusion, I have not written to cause further worry or concern, but to be open with you all about the current situation and to forewarn families that despite everyone's best efforts there may be periods of remote learning ahead of us during this term. I appreciate that this letter may have raised more questions for you and your child, but please be assured we will do everything we can to safeguard the health of your child and every member of the school community, and to communicate in as clearly and timely a manner as possible.

**Please check for further updates over the next 24 hour period.**

Yours sincerely,



Mr Ian Mottram  
**Headteacher**