



**Sunday 22<sup>nd</sup> December 2020**

## **Notification of Emergency PD day – Monkmoor, Severndale@Mary Webb, and Futures**

Dear parent carer,

First of all, I hope that this message finds you well after a very different Christmas break and that 2021 is a better year for us all.

I am sending you this late notification of an emergency PD day on the last day of the Christmas holidays as a last resort. I appreciate that this is far from ideal and will no doubt cause upset and issues for many of you. I apologise for this as we have worked with staff throughout the day to avoid this situation.

This situation is a result of urgent union advice to our teaching and support staff this morning, warning them of the lack of appropriateness of government guidance and directives to schools when considering the science surrounding Covid-19 safety in their working environments. The DfE special school guidance that was sent to us at 5pm on New Year's Eve, which I have included the link below, sets out the expectations for special schools to remain open during the introduction of Lateral Flow Testing, which is what we had planned to do, in addition to following and building on our current Covid-19 risk assessment.

It has since come to light late this afternoon following a series of email notifications from individual members of staff, that staff absence would have the potential to cause huge disruption to many class groups tomorrow and potentially the following 2 weeks. Please be assured that no time has been wasted in assessing this situation, making this tough decision, and then getting this information to you today, as I recognise the challenges many of you face in your day to day lives. I am very grateful for the efforts that I know that you will need to make to organise your child/young person to stay at home tomorrow at such short notice.

During the PD day we will work with staff to evaluate levels of staffing and pupils within each class group, and take any actions to enable all pupils to be welcomed back to school safely and sustainably, to take us through this period of uncertainty. To enable school to stay open to all pupils, we may need to reallocate staff to support teaching and learning, behaviour management, and maintain new Covid-secure bubbles. We will keep you informed of any changes to the staff supporting your child/ young person. In addition, we will also use the day to train and organise our staff to prepare to carry out Lateral Flow Testing, and plan for how this will be effectively managed.

It has recently been brought to my attention by a few parent carers, of their preference to keep their child at home for various personal reasons, relating specifically to the current Covid-19 pandemic. This type of parental request is now identified in the updated guidance (below) which is an available option to you as a Leave of Absence request, which would be assessed on a case by case basis. This option may support some families who would prefer to support their child/ young person at home with distance learning and safeguarding support, in line with academy expectations, as a result of this staffing disruption.

Our staff will call you between 10am - 12pm tomorrow to catch up with you following the Christmas break and help you with distance learning activities or support that you may need for the day. Further communications will be sent to you in the afternoon to update you on the situation and confirm arrangements to welcome your child/ young person back on Tuesday (5/1/21).

Monkmoor Campus  
Woodcote Way  
Monkmoor  
Shrewsbury  
SY2 5SH  
Tel: 01743 563333  
**Principal: Sabrina Hobbs**

# Severndale Specialist Academy



Everyone valued. Everyone included. Everyone learning.

We understand how disappointing this situation is, which is why we are doing everything we can to manage the return to school as safely and as smoothly as possible, considering the very different and challenging circumstances we have found ourselves in today.

We thank you in advance for your understanding and support with how we handle the safe return of all pupils and staff in this current situation.

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sabrina Hobbs', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Sabrina Hobbs  
Principal

Department for Education Guidance:

Mass asymptomatic testing in specialist settings - Updated 31 December 2020

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-for-full-opening-special-schools-and-other-specialist-settings/mass-asymptomatic-testing-in-specialist-settings>