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Thursday 28th January 2021

Dear Parents and Carers,

As you will be aware there is a national covid vaccination programme being rolled out across the country. The focus of the initial wave of vaccinations has been those people who are most vulnerable to the virus and those working directly with vulnerable people, such as health and social care staff.

Some local authorities have taken the decision to include staff working in special school settings as part of this group.

Newcastle City Council has made this decision and from this week, staff at Sir Charles Parsons, alongside other special schools in the city, have been offered the opportunity to be part of the vaccination programme.

This is something that special schools and learning disability organisations across the country have been asking for and we really appreciate the city council's understanding of the role of special school staff in supporting and caring for your children and young people.

Over the next few weeks, a large proportion of our staff will receive their first dose of the vaccine. The vaccine takes a few weeks to be effective, so about 3 weeks after receiving the injection, most staff will be less likely to contract the virus and if they do contract it, they will be less likely to have a severe case of covid.

At the moment, there is no evidence to suggest that having the vaccine reduces your ability to transmit infection. Staff may not become ill or be as ill as they might have been without the vaccine, but they may still be able to carry the infection and pass it on to others.

This means it is still really important that we continue to apply the same social distancing and hygiene measures in school now as we have been doing. Unless they are exempt, staff and students will still be required to wear face coverings in communal areas and on transport, we will be encouraging regular handwashing and will be maintaining 2 metre social distancing where we can throughout school.

Taking part in the vaccination programme is voluntary and some people will have very valid reasons why they may choose not to be part of the programme. This is a personal decision and we would appreciate it if parents and carers respected staff's right to privacy in this matter.

We will be continuing with our twice-weekly testing programme for staff in school and this information will help to build up a better picture nationally of the impact of the vaccine on reducing the rate of transmission of the virus.

If you have any questions or concerns about the vaccination programme or any other aspects of the schools approach to the covid pandemic, please get in touch and I will be happy to discuss them with you,

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'K. Hamilton'.

Karen Hamilton