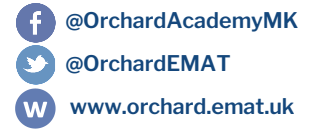




Together we will achieve.



14 December 2021

Dear Parents/Carers,

'Jack and the Beanstalk' Pantomime 2021 at Milton Keynes Theatre

After lengthy discussions with staff, senior leaders, and the Chief Executive Officer of the East Midlands Academy Trust, it is with an *extremely* heavy heart that I have this afternoon had to take the decision to cancel Thursday's trip to the pantomime.

Yesterday, we had eight members of staff absent from school – including a very substantial 25% of our educational support staff. We now know that at least five colleagues will still be absent on Thursday and, of course, there could well be more absences by then.

We had sold 300 tickets to children. Government guidance would therefore require us to take a very minimum of thirty staff to accompany the pupils. Additionally, we also have many children who require individual one-to-one support. The number of staff required therefore increases substantially to over forty. Fifty-eight children were due to remain at school, who would also require staff present to supervise them. I know we would very likely have some wonderful parents ready and willing to volunteer to support the trip but, unfortunately, government guidance is that volunteers should not be included in staffing ratios on trips.

Alongside concerns about staffing numbers, I have had anxieties expressed to me about putting staff, children and families at risk. As you may have seen in the news, the Omicron variant of coronavirus (which is known to spread far easier than previous variants) is spreading rapidly, and now makes up over 20% of coronavirus cases in England. Two doses of some vaccines offer almost no protection from an Omicron infection, and many of our staff (as well as many of you, I'm sure) are in an age category which means they are yet to have their third 'booster' jab. Anyone contracting coronavirus from tomorrow would, of course, be required to self-isolate over Christmas and sadly, several of our staff experienced this last year. There is absolutely no ability to socially distance in the theatre, and of course children have not been vaccinated and do not wear face-coverings.

I know our children will be deeply upset by the decision to cancel Thursday's trip at such a late stage. Please believe me when I say we are too, as the pantomime visit has always been a real highlight in the school year. I can only give my assurance that every consideration has been made and that the decision has by no means been taken lightly.

All parents / carers who have purchased a ticket will receive a **full refund for the whole price of the ticket**. This will happen as soon as possible, though I ask for your patience as our admin team process the refunds as quickly as possible.

Thank you for your continued support. May I take this opportunity to wish you a safe and restful Christmas break with your families.

Mr. C. Brown

Headteacher

Headteacher: Mr C. Brown. Assistant Headteachers: Mr L. Bartishel and Mr J. Wilson.
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