



4<sup>th</sup> January 2022

## **Return to School – January 2022**

Happy New Year!

I hope you have all had a good break and were able to spend some time doing things you enjoy over the Christmas holidays.

Before returning tomorrow and following on from the recent guidance that has been published I wanted to update you with changes released by the **Department for Education (DfE) regarding COVID-19**. As case numbers remain high, both nationally and locally, it is important that we continue to follow the guidance issued and do everything we can to safeguard everyone in our community – staff, children, parents and families.

The guidance issued by the DfE have small changes to how we have been operating in school and largely relate to self-isolation if your child tests positive and lateral flow testing. I also received further clarification on these areas this morning as part of the OCC Tuesday briefing.

Recent advice is now recommending use of **Lateral Flow Tests** from age 5 – I am aware there has been supply issues over the last few weeks of Lateral Flow Tests, however, when you can order again, it is suggested that you try to keep a small supply of LFT kits at home in case your child is identified as a close contact. Lateral Flow Test kits are available (when supplies have returned to normal) from local pharmacies or by ordering online. We are not given a supply of LFT kits for parents or children at primary school – these are for staff use only.

The **10-day self-isolation** period for people who record a positive PCR test result for COVID-19 has been **reduced to 7 days**, unless you cannot test for any reason. If your child tests positive for COVID-19 on a PCR test, they will need to self-isolate. The day of symptoms or date of test is classed as Day 0. Your child will then need to take a LFT on Day 6 and Day 7 of their isolation period. If they receive a negative test result on Day 6 and Day 7, and do not have a high temperature they are able to return to school on Day 8. The Day 6 and Day 7 tests must be taken 24 hours apart. You can continue to test daily if they do come back positive up until Day 10. From this day the normal isolation period ends and children can return.

If your child is identified as a **close contact** of someone who has tested positive for COVID-19 they will need to take a LFT every day for 7 days. They can continue to attend school as normal unless they receive a positive test result or develop COVID-19 symptoms. If they have a positive LFT result or develop COVID-19 symptoms they will need to take a PCR test, and self isolate until they receive a negative result. A close contact in the home environment would be anyone who lives in the same household as another person who has COVID-19 symptoms or has tested positive for COVID-19. We would ask that any children who this applies to complete the 7 days of Lateral Flow Testing. Schools continue to not carry out contact tracing – NHS Test and Trace will do this, although in exceptional circumstances we may be asked to assist.

This also applies to children under 5, with LFD testing at parental or guardian discretion.

Just like the Government, our priority is keeping school open and operating as normal. We will continue to do everything we can, with your support, to ensure this is possible. From tomorrow, school will return to operating as one whole school unit – there is no suggestion we should at this stage be in any form of bubbles (nor that they are effective to use any more as published in the recent DfE Operating guidance), but of course this will be regularly reviewed and if advised by OCC Education Covid team we will reinstate.

We will continue with the following systems of control: ventilation, handwashing, cleaning routines and mask wearing for anyone over the age of 11 – parents, staff and visitors. We will also request that anyone visiting has taken a LFT in the last 24 hours. We also will of course be following the testing and isolation protocols as listed above as well. Staff will test every other day at this current time.

Finally, if children are isolating and at home then all work for children will be placed on Google Classroom unless paper copies are requested.

We are looking forward to welcoming your children back to school tomorrow where we have some exciting learning opportunities planned.

We do have staff off currently who have tested positive for Covid, myself included, and I will keep you regularly updated with the situation over the coming weeks. Do please keep communicating with us too about your own situations and informing us of symptoms, testing and positive cases.

Take care,

Kind regards

Sarah Smith, Headteacher.