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10th January 2022

Whole School Update

Dear Parents/Carers,

The following letter contains lots of important updates and information for all our families. Please read carefully and make sure that you are aware of the current guidance and expectations, particularly around making sure your child is in school.

Contact tracing and self-isolation in education and childcare settings

As you are aware, education and childcare settings are not expected to conduct routine contact tracing as we have done previously. As with positive cases in any other setting, NHS Test and Trace will work with either the positive case - or in the case of children - the parents, carers or guardian of the positive case to identify close contacts. NHS Test and Trace already manages the contact tracing process for the rest of society - including children who have recorded a positive PCR test - and has expertise in supporting people to identify close contacts. Just to be clear, if we have a positive case in school now, we will not inform families but I will continue to keep you updated.

Below is more detail about how that process will work and what you need to do if your child tests positive for COVID-19.

Self-isolating and taking a test

If your child has COVID-19 symptoms, they should self-isolate, and you should immediately order a PCR test for them. If the PCR test result is negative, they can stop self-isolating. If the PCR result is positive, they must self-isolate.

1. If your child has a positive result from a lateral flow device (LFD) home test, they should self-isolate - and you should inform us immediately. You should book a confirmatory PCR test. If the confirmatory test is taken within two days and the result is negative, they can stop self-isolating (unless instructed to self-isolate for other reasons). If the confirmatory PCR test is positive (or is taken more than two days after the LFD), they must self-isolate. From Tuesday 11th January 2022, confirmatory PCR tests will no longer be needed if your child tests positive on a LFD test.
2. PCR tests can be booked online through the [NHS Test & Trace website](#) or by calling 119.
3. PCR test results will be recorded with NHS Test and Trace automatically, but you should also communicate the result to the education or childcare setting.
4. The government has recently introduced an option for individuals who test positive to end their self-isolation period on or after 7 days of self-isolation. Individuals who take an LFD test on day 6 and day 7 of their self-isolation period and receive two negative LFD test results taken 24 hours apart are no longer required to complete the full 10 days of self-isolation. If a person does not wish to or cannot participate in voluntary day 6 and day 7 LFD testing, they must continue to self-isolate for the full 10 day self-isolation period.

Contact Tracing

If your child gets a positive PCR test result, NHS Test and Trace will contact you, using the details you registered when booking/ordering/registering the PCR test. You and/or your child will be

asked a series of specific questions designed to identify who your child has been in close contact with. Being in an education or childcare setting with someone who has tested positive for COVID-19 will not necessarily mean a person is identified as a close contact.

You will be asked to provide the contact details, if you know them, of any of the individuals - or their parents or guardians - who have been identified as close contacts. NHS Test and Trace will then get in touch with these close contacts and provide appropriate instructions or advice (see below).

Self-isolation and/or testing of close contacts

Individuals are not required to self-isolate if they live in the same household as someone with COVID-19, or are a close contact of someone with COVID-19, and any of the following apply:

1. they are fully vaccinated
2. they are below the age of 18 years 6 months
3. they have taken part in, or are currently part of, an approved COVID-19 vaccine trial
4. they are not able to get vaccinated for medical reasons
5. Close contacts aged five and above are strongly advised to take part in Daily Testing of Covid Contacts. This means that if you are identified as a close contact by NHS Test and Trace or a public health official that you will be asked to take seven daily LFD tests. It is strongly advised that the daily LFD test is taken before leaving the house for the first time each day and provided the test is negative, your child will be able to continue attending their setting
6. Participation in Daily Testing of Covid Contacts is advisory but is strongly encouraged. This will help reduce transmission and support continued face-face education.
7. We would also advise any individuals identified as close contact to follow the guidance on [how to stay safe and help prevent the spread](#). Additionally, UKHSA [Stay at home guidance](#) details some further actions that close contacts may wish to take in addition to getting a PCR test.
8. Most supermarkets, council buildings and pharmacies have test kits available, for more information use this link- <https://www.wirral.gov.uk/covid-19-testing/covid-19-tests-people-who-do-not-have-symptoms>.
9. School **CANNOT** provide PCR or LFD test kits for families. We are only provided with a limited number for our staff and as we are now testing daily, we do not have any spare.
10. If you are isolating or have a positive case in your household but your child remains negative and feeling well, they must attend school. You will not be able to bring them in as it is a legal requirement that you remain at home but you must seek arrangements to have them brought in and collected from school. If you keep your child off school, their attendance will not be authorised unless under exceptional circumstances.

Attendance in School

Children have missed a significant amount of schooling- affecting both their level education and social opportunities. A reminder that your children should be in school, every day and on time. We are taking a firm stance on poor attendance in school and will be working with Wirral LA Attendance Team to look at fining and the possibility of prosecuting families who persistently keep their children off school. It is a legal requirement that your children are in school, keeping them off unnecessarily is not only breaking the law but also neglecting to meet your child's needs. We will also be reviewing all cases with Wirral Vulnerable Pupil Panel and may also look at the involvement of other services and the possibility that you may meet the threshold for educational neglect. If your child is absent from school, we should not have to chase you for a reason. If we do not hear from you, we will complete a home visit. Children missing from education is a significant safeguarding concern, especially if we cannot get in touch with you to ensure the safety of your child. You must call the school office before 9am to inform us of your child's absence and reason for being off school. Failure to inform us could result in an unauthorised absence and possible fine or referral to external support agencies. No holidays or leave of absences will be authorised at this time.

Wearing of Masks/Face Coverings

Please can I remind all parents and carers that masks **MUST** be worn at the school gates. If you do not have a face covering, we ask that you remain off site and do not approach our staff.

We have a large number of positive cases in our community at the moment and I will do all that I can to protect our staff and ensure that school is still able to remain open.

We are not having visitors into school at the moment and will only hold face to face meetings if absolutely necessary. No parent or carer should be on the school site at any time unless invited.

Please do not come into school, this includes the Family Centre or our entrance areas, unless asked to. Many thanks for your cooperation.

Risk Assessment & Contingency Plans

We are doing all that we can in school to prevent any risk from transmission and infection. We continue to have excellent ventilation across school, high standards and additional cleaning and infection control measures such as not sharing equipment, staying in class 'bubbles' handwashing, reducing contact. All staff are vaccinated and testing regularly. We will do everything we can to minimise disruption and ensure that school remains open. We are struggling with staff absence currently and if this continues or becomes more challenging, we may have to have alternative plans in place but will avoid closing classes or school wherever possible. School will always remain open for key worker and vulnerable children and we will always do our best to ensure that every child has face to face teaching in their own class.

We recognise how difficult this has been and the sacrifices that all families, education, and childcare settings have had to make. This has been an enormously challenging time for everyone, and we would like to take the opportunity to thank you for everything you have done. I am also asking that you remain patient with us as we continue to operate with fewer members of staff and in incredibly stressful circumstances.

Kind regards,

Mrs E Morris

Headteacher