



Tuesday 1 March 2022

Dear Parent/Carer,

Firstly, welcome back from the half term break, whilst it's been blustery and wet, we hope that you have been able to spend some time as a family and not got too wet or blown away in the process!

As you know the Government announcement last Monday demonstrates that there is increasing confidence that the country is moving from a pandemic to living and dealing with COVID-19. Guidance for schools followed the next day, which I have used to update our latest risk assessment, outbreak plans (which can be found on the website) and school protocols.

As the scientists acknowledge, the virus hasn't gone away, and I want to reassure you that your child's safety has been at the forefront of our decision making throughout this situation and will continue to be our primary consideration going forward, along with our duty of care to them, the staff and the wider community.

Although we still have many COVID measures in place, there are some changes:

Staff

Staff have been twice weekly testing since January 2021 as directed by the DfE but, moving forward, this has now stopped as the DfE have stopped sending LFD test kits into primary schools. However, as is the expectation for children, they will test should they feel unwell.

Symptoms

It is still the case that children should not attend school if they have:

- a new continuous cough
- a high temperature
- a loss of, or change in, your normal sense of taste or smell (anosmia)

If you or your child have any of these symptoms you must take a **PCR test**. You are advised to stay at home and avoid contact with other people while you are waiting for the test results. **Children will not be allowed into school while they are waiting for their results.**

Please be mindful that other symptoms linked with COVID-19 include shortness of breath, fatigue, loss of appetite, muscle ache, sore throat, headache, stuffy or runny nose, diarrhoea, nausea and vomiting. Although, most of these symptoms may also be due to other illnesses.

Isolation

The guidance indicates that whilst the law has changed, the directives for public safety remain. We will follow this guidance, so isolation continues to be up to 10 days, unless you have 2 negative tests on day 5 and 6, 24 hours apart. Isolation will finish on day 7 at the earliest following 2 negative test results.

'Children and young people with COVID-19 should not attend their education setting while they are infectious. They should take a LFD test from 5 days after their symptoms started (or the day their test was taken if they did not have symptoms) followed by another one the next day. If both these test results are negative, they should return to their educational setting if they normally attend one, as long as they feel well enough to do so and do not have a temperature'.

DFE Operational Guidance

Please continue to liaise with the school office about your child's return date after testing positive. We will review our protocols as and when the guidance is further updated.

It is very important that these isolation procedures are followed by staff and children so that the risk of transmission is kept to a minimum. We have been very fortunate not to have many serious cases amongst staff and children, however, some of our staff who have tested positive have experienced severe enough symptoms to be unable to work for at least a week. If we increase the risk of infection further by allowing children and staff into school whilst still possibly infectious, we increase the risk of further staff and pupil absences. The result of staff absences could affect - not being able to teach classes, set remote learning effectively, the cancellation of trips and extra curricular clubs, residential etc; as we would be unable to staff them.

Close contact changes

The new guidance has brought an end to routine contact tracing. Close contacts will no longer be required to self isolate or advised to take daily LFD tests for 7 days. Staff, children and young people should attend their education settings as usual. **However, please be vigilant for the signs of COVID-19.**

'Children and young people who usually attend an education or childcare setting and who live with someone who has COVID-19 should continue to attend the setting as normal'.

DFE Operational Guidance

Possible further disruption to schooling

It is almost guaranteed now that schools will remain open, but there is the very real chance that there may be further disruption to 'schooling' for individual children who need to isolate or are unwell. Please remember that remote learning will only be provided if your child tests positive for Covid-19 and is well enough to complete the work set. If this is the case, remote learning will be set on Seesaw, from the following day you notify us of our child's positive test result.

Any moves to remote learning for full classes will be communicated if this is directed by Public Health, however we think this is very unlikely.

If cases rise across the school additional measures may need to be reintroduced to reduce transmission. If these measures are needed, you will be informed as soon as possible.

We thank you, as always, for the support you have given us during this time. Again, I assure you that whatever happens, and the decisions we make, are always made with our whole school community's very best interest at heart.

As ever, if you have any questions regarding the above, please contact us by School Gateway, email at admin@heathergarth.org or telephone us on 01709894149.

Kind regards

Mrs J Winnard
Headteacher