



Dear Parents,

As we approach the end of the first full week back in school, I just wanted to write to you with some regular updates.

The thing I will continue to stress is how well the children are doing. It is wonderful to be working with them again and they have all settled in brilliantly. The staff have been doing lots of work on mental health and well-being, ensuring all the children are comfortable with their return, and have now also started curriculum teaching, assessing 'gaps' (although we are avoiding that word!) and delivering support.

You will no doubt be aware that nationally and locally, the picture is constantly changing and many schools are starting to have to implement their plans for partial or 'bubble' closure.

The messages and advice from Government and PHE can sometimes be confusing and hard to follow, so attached to this letter is a compilation of some of the latest information. As ever, if you are in doubt, please do contact us and we will advise as best we can. We can't make any diagnosis for you but we can try to interpret the guidance with you. It can be extra hard as the rate of change can be high – such as the 'Rule of 6' which comes into effect from Monday. If there are any major changes needed at school, we will keep you updated.

Thank you to everyone for your support and helping us make St Joseph's as Covid secure as possible. As I wrote earlier, whatever update there is to guidance, there are some core messages that, if we all follow, will help keep the risk as low as possible. Therefore, please can I stress:

- **Do not send your child in if they are displaying any of the Covid symptoms.**
- **Please keep your distance from others when waiting on the playground.**
- **Please try to keep to the timings so that large gatherings are minimised.**
 - **Please only one adult on site.**
- **If you need to relay messages to the school please use email.**

A few parents have asked about the wearing of masks when dropping off or collecting. The guidance states that masks are not needed for children under 11, but if the adults wish to wear one while on the playground, that could be a good suggestion.

As explained in a letter yesterday, please can I ask you to ensure you have had a go at logging on to Google classroom and letting us know of any issues.

To the list above, I am going to add one more – Be kind to each other. The last few months have caused us all to slow down and reflect on the things that really matter. As our School Mission Statement says – Love One Another. The time we are all given can be spent in anger, complaint or intolerance, or we can all do our bit to stay positive, show kindness and help make this world one of peace and love, one school at a time!



We receive guidance from the Government, Local Authority, Public Health, our Health and Safety providers and many more. We have created the below as a compilation of some of the more frequently asked questions from parents.

Q. What symptoms should schools be looking out for? How can schools tell if a pupil has just a cold, or whether it might be coronavirus?

The Department for Education has worked closely with Public Health England (PHE) and NHS Test and Trace to ensure that we are doing all we can to minimise the potential risks of spread. A key part of this is recognising the correct symptoms.

We ask that schools recommend to their pupils and staff who feel unwell, that they get tested if:

1. They develop one or more of the main coronavirus symptoms: **a high temperature; a new, continuous cough; or the loss or change of their sense of taste or smell;** or
2. They are recommended to get tested by a healthcare provider (e.g. GP or nurse).

If a child is tested because they are unwell, they should stay off school until they receive a result. As in any year, as schools go back, children may pick up common colds or feel unwell with a sore throat, stomach upset or a headache. These children may need to stay off school and parents/carers should call their GP or dial 111 to seek medical advice if they are concerned about their child's health.

Q. Should my child stay off if they are ill?

The Government have made clear their expectation that all children should attend school. If your child is displaying Covid symptoms, they should not come into school and should have a Covid test.

If they are unwell with other symptoms – e.g. stomach ache, sore throat etc – it would be the usual arrangements of making a decision based on the severity of the illness. To avoid bugs being circulated around school, it may be advisable to stay off for a period of 48 hours. However, schools are expected to continue their usual monitoring of attendance and to retain their statutory responsibility of informing the LA Attendance Officer if attendance is an issue – i.e. below 96%

Q. A pupil has coronavirus symptoms – what happens next?

As set out by the Chief Medical Officers of England, Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales, coronavirus is rarely serious in children. If a child (or staff member) develops one or more of the



main coronavirus symptoms described above, they should be tested and stay off school until they have a result. Schools should ask parents and staff to inform them immediately of the results of a test.

Crucial to our overall support for schools is ensuring that everyone with coronavirus symptoms has access to a test as soon as they develop those symptoms. We have made testing available throughout the country and **anyone with symptoms can book a test online or over the telephone through 119** to get the certainty they need to protect themselves and those around them.

Q. A positive case has been confirmed. What happens next – who has to go home and isolate?

If a positive case is confirmed, swift action will be taken to ask those who have been in close contact with them to self-isolate. Public Health England's local health protections teams and local authorities will support and advise schools.

The health protection team will work with schools in this situation to guide them through the actions they need to take. Based on the advice from the health protection team, schools must send home those people who have been in close contact with the person who has tested positive, advising them to self-isolate for 14 days since they were last in close contact with that person when they were infectious. Close contact means:

- direct close contacts - face to face contact with an infected individual for any length of time, within 1 metre, including being coughed on, a face to face conversation, or unprotected physical contact (skin-to-skin). This is likely to be the classmates and teacher of that class.
- proximity contacts - extended close contact (within 1 to 2 metres for more than 15 minutes) with an infected individual
- travelling in a small vehicle, like a car, with an infected person

All direct and close contacts should be excluded from school and advised to self-isolate for 14 days starting from the day they were last in contact with the case. For example, if the case tests positive on Thursday and was last in school on the previous Monday the first day of the 14-day period is on the Monday. Household members of contacts do not need to self-isolate unless the contact develops symptoms.



Q. Should a child/staff member come to school if a member of their household is unwell?

No. If a member of the child's household is unwell with COVID-19 symptoms then all household members should isolate for 14 days starting from the day the first household member(s) became ill. If another member subsequently develops symptoms then they should isolate for 10 days from the date they developed symptoms. The household member(s) should be tested within 5 days of symptom onset. If all symptomatic household members test negative, the child/staff member can return to school.

Q. If I am notified by a parent that their child is ill do I need to exclude the other children in their class?

No, classmates and staff can attend school as normal. The child who is ill should stay at home and be advised to get tested. If the child has any siblings who attend the school, they should also be self-isolating at home for 14 days. If the child tests positive for COVID-19, direct and proximity contacts should be excluded for 14 days. The school will be contacted by contact tracers to support with contact identification and provision of advice.

Q. Can the siblings of a child who has been excluded because they are a contact of a case attend school?

Yes, other household members of the contact do not need to self-isolate unless the child, young person or staff member they live with in that group subsequently develops symptoms

Q. A child/parent reports to us that they have had contact with someone with symptoms – what should we do?

There is no action required of the school. No one with symptoms should be attending school and anyone who develops symptoms while at school should be isolated and sent home as soon as possible. Schools should regularly remind parents of the government guidance on staying at home and the importance of a household self-isolating if anyone in the household develops symptoms.

Q. If a child has COVID-19 symptoms, gets tested and tests negative, can they return to school even if they still have symptoms?

If the child is NOT a known contact of a confirmed case the child can return to school if the result



is negative, provided they feel well and they have not had a fever for 48 hours.

If the child is a contact of a confirmed case they must stay off school for the 14 day isolation period, even if they test negative. This is because they can develop the infection at any point up to day 14 (the incubation period for COVID-19), so if a child tests negative on day 3 they may still go on to develop the infection.

Q. If a child who was a contact of a confirmed case tests negative, can they return to school?

No, the child should complete 14 days of isolation.

Q. A member of my household has symptoms. Should I get my child tested even if they don't have symptoms?

Those sent home to self-isolate, having been in close contact with someone who has tested positive, should only get tested if they develop symptoms themselves. The symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19) are a high temperature, a new, continuous cough, or a loss or change to your sense of smell or taste. The capacity of the NHS Test and Trace system must be protected for those with symptoms of the virus. Booking is essential for drive in and walk in test sites, and under 18s must be accompanied by a parent or guardian.

Q. In the case of a local community outbreak, what should schools do?

If a local area sees a spike in infection rates from localised community spread, appropriate authorities will decide which measures to implement to help contain the spread. The Department for Education will be involved in decisions at a local and national level affecting a geographical area, and will support appropriate authorities and individual settings to follow the health advice.

We expect schools to have the capacity to offer immediate remote education where a class, group or small number of pupils need to self-isolate, or there is a local lockdown requiring pupils to remain at home. Schools are expected to consider how to continue to improve the quality of their existing offer and have a strong contingency plan in place for remote education provision by the end of September.