

28 February 2022

Dear Parents and Carers

Changes to COVID rules and impact on school

I am sorry to have to write to you yet again with respect to COVID and rules with regard to attendance to school, but there is a somewhat ambiguous message being projected and I want to be clear as to how I believe the system continues to operate around students attending school.

Clearly there has been an announcement that rules have changed and there has been a lifting of the statutory requirement to self-isolate if you have COVID, however, there is still general advice to self-isolate. As of today, we came back to school after half-term and three members of staff have tested positive and all three have been asked to stay at home and self-isolate. I cannot direct staff, but as a community we expect our staff to take actions to protect both themselves and others.

The guidance for students is more direct, but I fear discussed less openly. I have included a link in this letter to the Department for Education's (DFE) latest guidance:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1057106/220224_Schools_guidance.pdf.

I have included this, because it also talks about students self-isolating if they have COVID. Given the messages that we have taken today, it is clear that parents want to do the right thing and I am very grateful for that, thank you. These parents are keeping their children at home and continuing to self-isolate.

I am not a Doctor or an epidemiologist, I am a teacher and I am not qualified to provide any better guidance than that given by the DFE or the NHS, and that is why the linked document is really important.

Page 10 of the guidance states the following:

'Welcoming children back to school

In most cases, parents and carers will agree that a pupil with the key symptoms of COVID-19 should not attend the school, given the potential risk to others. If a parent or carer insists on a pupil attending your school where they have a confirmed or suspected case of COVID-19, you can take the decision to refuse the pupil if, in your reasonable judgement, it is necessary to protect other pupils and staff from possible infection with COVID-19.'

I cannot see, given my limited knowledge and understanding, how I can do anything other than insist that we follow the guidance and self-isolate, and if necessary direct parents to keep their children at home, however, I would hope that I will not have to do this.

Guidance on self-isolation can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-people-with-covid-19-and-their-contacts/covid-19-people-with-covid-19-and-their-contacts#what-to-do-if-you-have-covid-19>.

With the most pertinent section being:

'If you have COVID-19, stay at home and avoid contact with other people

If you have COVID-19 you can infect other people from 2 days before your symptoms start, and for up to 10 days after. You can pass on the infection to others, even if you have mild symptoms or no symptoms at all. If you have COVID-19 you should stay at home and avoid contact with other people.

You should:

- **not attend work. If you are unable to work from home, you should talk to your employer about options available to you. You may be eligible for Statutory Sick Pay**
- **ask friends, family, neighbours or volunteers to get food and other essentials for you**
- **not invite social visitors into your home, including friends and family**
- **postpone all non-essential services and repairs that require a home visit**
- **cancel routine medical and dental appointments. If you are concerned about your health or you have been asked to attend an appointment in person during this time, discuss this with your medical contact and let them know about your symptoms or your test result**
- **if you can, let people who you have been in close contact with know about your positive test result so that they can follow this guidance**

Many people will no longer be infectious to others after 5 days. You may choose to take an LFD test from 5 days after your symptoms started (or the day your test was taken if you did not have symptoms) followed by another LFD test the next day. If both these test results are negative, and you do not have a high temperature, the risk that you are still infectious is much lower and you can safely return to your normal routine.'

I know that we all want COVID to be over, but it isn't, I don't know if it will ever be. I do know that I know less than the experts and that is why I am asking you to please follow the guidance, because minds far more capable than mine are drawing the guidance up. Please follow the self-isolation procedure. We will insist on it for your children, not because we want to take away any parent's rights, but because I am tasked with protecting the school community and to do so, I need to follow the guidance.

As ever, your support is much appreciated.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'K Flanagan', written in a cursive style.

Mr K Flanagan
Headteacher