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8th December 2021

Dear Parents and Carers,

FOR PARENTS INFORMATION REGARDING THE NEWOMICRON VARIANT OF COVID-19 AND ADDITIONAL MEASURES IN SCHOOL

We appreciate that you will already be aware that some national measures have been reintroduced in response to the emergence of a new COVID-19 variant, which is called Omicron.

All individuals who have been identified as a close contact of a suspected or confirmed case of the Omicron variant of COVID-19, irrespective of vaccination status and age, will be contacted directly and required to self-isolate immediately and asked to book a PCR test.

There are still high numbers of children and young people in County Durham testing positive for COVID-19 and the highest case rates are in school age children. This is leading to spread of COVID-19 within families and into older age groups.

The increase in COVID-19 cases in children is disrupting their education, affecting schools and has an impact on the wider community.

We have received recommendations from the Government and Durham County Council's Public Health team and have decided to re-introduce the following measures to reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission in school:

- The use of face coverings in communal areas for all adults
- Maintaining our current start and finish times – however we may need to re-evaluate this as circumstances change – for example in prolonged periods of bad weather.
- Open days and events to move to a virtual format in the New Year
- To cancel or postpone whole school events e.g. assemblies
- PCR testing for all adults and pupils if they are a close contact of a positive case in their household*. Please provide evidence of the test result to school before your child returns.
- Daily LFT testing at home for 7 days for any adult or pupil in key stage 2 (year 3) or above who is a household contact of a positive case (that is not the Omicron variant) and is exempt from isolation and continues to attend school.
- Additional attention will be given to ventilation, cleaning and respiratory and hand hygiene



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*Note: People who have tested positive with a PCR test within the last 90 days should not be encouraged to test unless they develop new symptoms

Please be reassured that for most people, coronavirus (COVID-19) will be a mild illness.

School Trips

At present school is planning to go ahead with the trips to Hall Hill Farm and the Gala Theatre. If you feel uncomfortable about your child attending either trip please notify us. However, we are unable to offer any refunds unless the venues themselves cancel the events.

Key Stage 2 performance

At the time of writing this letter the Key Stage 2 performance will still go ahead. To keep everybody safe, please ensure that if you attend you wear a face covering and can provide evidence of a negative lateral flow test (This should have been carried out within the last 24 hours). **Evidence should be provided via an electronic device or printed out confirmation of a test – you should not bring the lateral flow test strip.** Please do not attend if you feel unwell. Thank you for your understanding and co-operation.

School Holidays

Please note that the children will return to school on Thursday 6th January not the 5th as previously advised.

LFD Testing advice

We would recommend you have a supply of LFD testing kits at home in the event you are requested to use them. You can order home testing kits to be delivered to your home here www.gov.uk/order-coronavirus-rapid-lateral-flow-tests

Or you can collect LFD kits at Community Collect sites across the County. To find your nearest collection point please enter your post code here maps.test-and-trace.nhs.uk

If you pick up tests from a pharmacy, you may be asked for a 'collect code' this helps the NHS match your details to the tests. To get a 'collect code' please visit test-for-coronavirus.service.gov.uk/collect-lateral-flow-kits

Please register the result of your home test at www.gov.uk/report-covid19-result

What to do if your child develops symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19) or tests positive for COVID-19



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Healthy School



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The most common symptoms of COVID-19 are recent onset of:

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

If your child does develop symptoms, they should get a PCR test and remain at home at least until the result is known. Book a free PCR test at www.gov.uk/get-coronavirus-test If positive, your child should isolate for 10 full days after their symptoms appeared.

If you are concerned about your child's symptoms, you can seek advice from NHS 111 at 111.nhs.uk/ or by phoning 111.

If your child has a positive test result but does not have symptoms they should stay at home and self-isolate for 10 full days from the date the positive test was taken. This isolation period will be extended if they go on to develop symptoms by counting 10 full days from the day following their symptom onset.

You must always register the result of your home test at www.gov.uk/report-covid19-result

Help, support, and further information.

To help you comply with the requirement to self-isolate, the County Durham Together Community Hub can provide access to essential supplies, financial support and emotional support as well as other services. Please visit www.durham.gov.uk/covid19help or call the Community Hub on 03000 260260 for further details.

There is also support available the coronavirus section via durhamlocate.org.uk

Finally, we would like to thank you for everything you've done to keep your family and community safe, and for your patience in continuing to support our school during this challenging time.

Yours sincerely

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S Cornforth, Headteacher



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