

24th September 2021

Ms J Palmer BSc, MA, MA, NPQH
Principal

Dear Parent/Carers

Re: COVID-19 update

As the term progresses, we have received some comments on pupils attending school with colds and coughs and would like to take this opportunity to advise you of the process and guidance in place for when someone tests positive for COVID-19 or has symptoms. These arrangements follow government guidelines and are not Meadowfield dictated but we are required to follow them.

Under the guidance, *'if your child tests positive for COVID-19 using a PCR test, NHS Test and Trace will contact you, using the details provided when the PCR test was ordered. Test and Trace will then get in touch with these close contacts to provide instructions or advice.*

*Those who are **under 18-years 6-months or fully vaccinated (second vaccine received 14 days ago or more) are no longer required to self-isolate if they are identified as close contacts of a positive COVID-19 case.** They will, however be contacted to let them know that they have been in close contact with someone who has tested positive. They will also be offered a PCR test and provided with information and advice on how to minimise the risks of onward spread. If your child is identified as a close contact, they can still attend school unless they develop symptoms or are advised otherwise by Test and Trace'. (DfE Guidance, August 2021). 18-year olds have been given 6 months grace to get their vaccinations.*

To summarise:

COVID-19 symptoms are:

- High temperature (37.8C or higher)
- New, continuous cough – this means a lot of coughing for more than an hour, or 3 or more coughing episodes in 24 hours (if you usually have a cough, it may be worse than usual) - This is usually a dry (unproductive) cough, unless you have an underlying lung condition that normally makes you cough up phlegm or mucus
- Loss or change to sense of smell or taste.

Important point: anyone who has had COVID-19 can continue to cough for many weeks after they are no longer infectious.

Once in school, any child showing symptoms of being unwell is monitored closely by school staff, who are all trained and aware of the symptoms of COVID-19. Temperatures are checked regularly by trained first aiders; the nursing team is consulted, where necessary; parents are liaised with if staff need further information. Staff are clear on protocols if/when a person in school displays a COVID-19 symptom and follow our school's COVID-19 risk assessment procedures. It is in nobody's interests to keep a child in school if they display a COVID-19 symptom: we all want to stay safe and prevent the spread of this virus.

Any pupil displaying COVID-19 symptoms is placed in isolation with a member of staff until they are collected by a parent/carer, who will then be advised to seek a PCR test for the pupil. Please take a photograph/screenshot of the PCR test result and forward to the school office, office@meadowfield.kent.sch.uk. Once we have seen a negative PCR result the pupil can return to school.

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We are now at a point in the year that is considered 'cold and flu season'. School staff will continue to work hard to make well-informed judgements about how to support children who come to school with symptoms of being unwell with common colds.

These symptoms may include:

- a blocked or runny nose
- coughs
- sneezing
- a raised temperature
- a sore throat
- headaches
- muscle aches
- pressure in your ears and face
- chills
- mild fatigue
- Watery discharge from nose that thickens and turns yellow or green

It remains a challenge for all schools to strike the right balance between keeping everyone in our school community safe and not depriving our pupils of a right to education. Government expectations of schools are very clear: alongside ensuring that schools have control measures in place to reduce risk of virus transmission, it also states that *'there is now an imperative to reduce the disruption to children and young people's education... The evidence is clear that being out of education causes significant harm to educational attainment, life chances, mental and physical health'* (DfE Guidance, August 2021).

We have been made aware that some transport companies are refusing to accept pupils who have been a close contact of a positive COVID-19 case without a confirmed negative PCR test. This is in direct conflict with the guidance for school's which states:

'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:

- *they are fully vaccinated*
- *they are below the age of 18 years and 6 months*
- *they have taken part in or are currently part of an approved COVID-19 vaccine trial*
- *they are not able to get vaccinated for medical reasons*

Instead, they will be contacted by NHS Test and Trace, informed they have been in close contact with a positive case and advised to take a PCR test. We would encourage all individuals to take a PCR test if advised to do so'. (DfE Guidance, August 2021).

The school have raised these issues with KCC but each transport company will have their own COVID-19 secure working procedures in place. However, if your child travels on transport and is refused onto the bus, as long as they do not have COVID-19 symptoms themselves, you can bring them into school via your own transport.

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I would also like to remind parents/carers that every Meadowfield School community member; pupil, staff or parent/carer has a right to privacy and posting on social media, discussing individual pupils with transport passenger assistances or any other outside person breaches confidentiality, and possibly the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and can have serious consequences. If you have any concerns, questions or complaints, please do not hesitate to get in contact with me via email, office@meadowfield.kent.sch.uk.

The following is a guide for parents and carers and may answer some questions you have.
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/what-parents-and-carers-need-to-know-about-early-years-providers-schools-and-colleges-during-the-coronavirus-COVID-19-outbreak/step-4-update-what-parents-and-carers-need-to-know-about-early-years-providers-schools-and-colleges>

We do expect that there will be cases of COVID-19 across our community over the coming weeks, please continue to be vigilant for symptoms. If you are in any doubt, order a PCR test for your child at <https://www.gov.uk/get-coronavirus-test> or call 119.

We recognise how difficult the past 18 months have been and the sacrifices that all families have had to make. Thank you for everything you have done to support your child and our school.

Whilst writing I would like to remind everyone to be mindful of our local community and our neighbouring school when parking outside of the school as we have been alerted to some issues of inconsiderate parking which could place everyone in danger. I thank you for your co-operation.

Yours faithfully



Dan Zaccheo
Deputy Principal