St. Joseph's Catholic Primary School

'We Work, We Care, We Pray, We Share'

COVID REVIEW & UPDATE

26th February 2022

Dear Parents/Carers,

I hope that you are all well and that your children have enjoyed their half term. I am writing to update you on our COVID-19 measures, in light of the government's announcement last week.

On Monday 21 February, the Prime Minister set out the next phase of the government's COVID-19 response 'Living with COVID-19'. This led to an update for schools from the DfE. It states that, "COVID-19 continues to be a virus that we learn to live with and the imperative to reduce the disruption to children and young people's education remains." We will now take this as an overriding aim, along with our own ongoing aims that have guided us thus far - see below:

Aims:

- To reduce the likelihood of classes being closed by public health due to outbreak situations (i.e. 3 or more positive cases in a class).
- To reduce the likelihood of classes being closed due to covid-related staff absences.
- To limit the level of disruption to children's education and well-being.
- To recognise the impact of government and school measures on working parents and attempt to strike a reasonable balance.
- To offer as full and enriching education as possible, to also include sports clubs etc.
- To reduce risks to the most vulnerable.
- To be mindful of the impact on other sectors and be part of the communal effort to allow society to continue as normally as possible.

For the education and childcare sectors, the main changes announced by the DfE include:

- changes to self-isolation and daily testing of close contacts
- changes to testing in education and childcare settings and children's social care services

We continue to control all infections in school, such as sickness viruses, by following Public Health advice on control measures and periods away from school. As we' learn to live' with COVID-19, as a caring Christian community we must continue to recognise that COVID-19 is far more infectious than most other viruses and some people within our school are at a higher risk than others, so our response therefore needs to be proportionate and considerate.

Control Measures

The main mitigations for controlling COVID-19 are:

1. Ensure good hygiene for everyone.
2. Maintain appropriate cleaning regimes.
3. Keep occupied spaces well ventilated.
4. Follow public health advice on testing, self-isolation and managing confirmed cases of COVID-19.

Points 1-3 have remained consistent throughout the pandemic and will continue to be hugely important. It is point 4 that alters according to circumstances, so updates to these are explained in the chart below.

	GOVERNMENT GUIDELINES & SCHOOL MEASURES
1	**ROUTINE LATERAL FLOW TESTING:** Children do not need to engage in routine asymptomatic testing. Children do not need to test routinely in the event of being a close contact.
2	**IN THE EVENT OF A POSITIVE TEST:** The legal requirement to self-isolate in the event of testing positive has been removed. Public Health advice for schools, however, is unchanged. Schools are expected to ask that children remain at home for 5 days and may return when they have tested negative on day 5 and 6, or after two consecutive negative tests.
3	**IN THE EVENT OF DISPLAYING COVID SYMPTOMS:** The DfE guidance states that, "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." This will require honest and open communication between home and school, which we have maintained throughout the pandemic anyway. Please contact school if you ever need to discuss your situation.
4	**IN THE EVENT OF A POSITIVE CASE IN CLASS:** Close contacts of positive cases are no longer required to self-isolate or advised to take daily tests, and contact tracing has ended. Out of a sense of responsibility, we will however inform you of any positive cases in your child's class.
5	**OUTBREAK SITUATIONS:** We have a contingency plan to respond to outbreak situations, where measures can be stepped up and down as appropriate. Public Health will also advise whether any testing of close contacts should be undertaken in these circumstances.
6	**COLD-LIKE SYMPTOMS:** Parents know their children better than anybody and can identify when they are just '*not right*', so please do what you feel is right and maintain good communication with school.
7	**IN THE EVENT OF A POSITIVE CASE IN YOUR HOUSEHOLD:** Close contacts of positive cases are no longer required to self-isolate or advised to take daily tests, and contact tracing has ended. Out of a sense of responsibility, we kindly ask that you inform school of any positive cases in your household. This will allow us to discuss how we mitigate the risk of transmission to school.
8	**FACE COVERINGS:** Face coverings are no longer required, either inside or outside of school. In the event of an outbreak, a director of public health might advise school that face coverings should temporarily be worn in communal areas or classrooms. We will have our own contingency plan to respond to any outbreaks, as instructed by DfE.

This guidance marks a new chapter in our collective response to COVID-19. Appropriate protective measures will always divide opinion and we are mindful that this will be no different. Please be assured that we will always take your children's health and safety seriously and will remain as vigilant as possible to reduce risks, within the guidelines that we are given.

We sincerely thank you in advance for your support. If you have any questions and/or concerns, please don't hesitate to get in touch and I will do my best to get back to you as soon as possible. I also always welcome a chat to discuss individual circumstances, so feel free to make an appointment for a phone call.

Kind regards,

Mr J Riley