

HOLYWELL SCHOOL

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Update Letter : 8th December, 2020

Dear Parents, Carers and Students

Thank you all for your support and kind words following the emails and communications over the weekend and Monday about the three recent Covid-19 cases at school. We have been incredibly lucky in having very few cases at school and this is the first time that we have had to ask a significant number of students to self-isolate. Please note that we do only have three confirmed cases at the moment.

Having had several questions from students, having seen some queries and concerns on social media and having received a few phone calls from anxious parents, I thought it might be helpful to provide a further update and answer some of the frequently asked questions.

What happens when a positive case is reported?

- We have to work quickly!
- We liaise with the DfE Coronavirus Support Team and Public Health England and complete a risk assessment.
- We have to identify 'close contacts'. These are defined as:
 - a person who has had face-to-face contact (within one metre), with someone who has tested positive for COVID-19, including:
 - being coughed on
 - having a face-to-face conversation within one metre
 - having skin-to-skin physical contact, or
 - contact within one metre for one minute or longer without face-to-face contact
 - a person who has been within 2 metres of someone who has tested positive for COVID-19 for more than 15 minutes

Close contacts have to self-isolate for 14 days. So with one of our recent cases, the Teaching Assistant had worked closely with two class groups and a small number of individual students – hence the need for two form groups to self-isolate from Friday last week. With the student case, the student was a member of one of the self-isolating classes but was not in school on Friday. She was taken for a test on Friday and tested positive over the weekend. Both school and the family completed all the 'track and trace'/close contacts checks (including class group, friends, who she was sat next to on the bus) and all contacts are now self-isolating.

- The time period for identifying 'close contacts' is 48 hours prior to person with the positive test' having an onset of symptoms or from the date of the test if asymptomatic (in all three of our recent cases, the individuals have been asymptomatic).
- Once identified and if students/staff are in school, they leave the premises as soon as possible.
- Only close contacts need to self-isolate.

For further information – have a look at the Government advice:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-for-contacts-of-people-with-possible-or-confirmed-coronavirus-covid-19-infection-who-do-not-live-with-the-person/guidance-for-contacts-of-people-with-possible-or-confirmed-coronavirus-covid-19-infection-who-do-not-live-with-the-person#what-do-we-mean-by-a-contact>



Headteacher: Mr MG Simpson MA, NPQH

Deputy Headteacher: Mr S Van Der Merwe – Deputy Headteacher / Designated Safeguarding Lead: Miss A Stewart

Assistant Headteacher: Mrs H Donnellan – Designated Safeguarding Lead / SENDCo: Mrs J Davies

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How do you work out the time-scales?

- Anyone with a positive test has to self-isolate for at least 10 days (longer if the temperature does not subside) – this is calculated either from the onset of symptoms or from the day of the test. Anyone identified as a close contact has to self-isolate for 14 days. This is calculated from the last contact with the person with the positive test.

What about students mingling at break and lunchtime?

- Students are in Year Group bubbles at break and lunchtime. The virus does not survive well outside, so the risk is greatly reduced. If a student or staff member tests positive, we ask them to identify with whom they had close contact at break and lunchtime (this was done with all the recent cases).

Why isn't the whole year group sent home?

- There is a national imperative to have as many children in school as possible so year groups will only self-isolate if all are identified as 'close contacts'. The only other scenario where year groups (or multiple year groups) would be sent home to self-isolate is where there are insufficient numbers of staff in school to safely teach and support students.

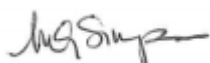
Is there a seating plan on the buses?

- Yes there is! On departing school, students are escorted bus-by-bus and in separate year groups to their vehicle. The vehicles are not always the same model day-to-day and some have more capacity downstairs than others. However, Year 8 board the bus first and sit at the back of the top deck. Year 7 are next and fill up the top deck in front of Year 8. Year 6 board downstairs and are followed by Year 5. Sometimes, a few Year 5 students need to sit upstairs due to lack of capacity downstairs and they sit at the front of the bus. In the morning, we are not able to supervise students embarking the buses – this is the responsibility of the bus drivers. The drivers take this very seriously and board the students one year group at a time. We also rely on the students to sit in the right places and certainly, when we disembark the students at school, they are usually all in the right sections of the bus.
- All students are now obliged to wear face coverings on the bus – we ask for your full support in ensuring ALL students have a face covering with them at all times.

I've heard that lots of staff have symptoms – should I be worried?

- There is no need to be worried. Only the two members of staff with positive tests have symptoms – no other member of staff has symptoms. We have had some staff who have needed to stay at home due to family members being ill (non-covid-19 related issues). We also have a number of staff (teachers and teaching assistants) who are self-isolating – this is a precautionary measure. Some staff are self-isolating because they had an advisory alert on the 'track and trace' app. Students who have been in contact with them do not need to self-isolate. The app works on a phone-to-phone proximity basis (which even works through walls!) and, following a lengthy discussion with public health, we have advised those staff that they need to follow the self-isolation guidance. It is only if the members of staff develop symptoms that we will need to take further measures.

I hope that this answers some of your questions. If you have any further queries, please call and we will try to help. Stay safe.



Mr Simpson