

St Mary's C of E Aided Primary School

A Christ-centred school with a child-centred curriculum

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Headteacher: Mrs S Copus B.Ed(Hons), NPQH

Dear Parents,

1st March 2022

COVID Update

Firstly, our children have returned to school positively and have settled back into school life well. We are hopeful for a busy half term with many learning activities.

As you know, the Government announcement last week demonstrates that there is increasing confidence that the country is moving from a pandemic, to living and dealing with COVID-19.

Guidance for schools followed the next day, and has been further updated; I have used this to update our latest risk assessment, contingency plans and school protocols. The guidance for parents and carers has also been updated for your reference. As the scientists acknowledge, the virus hasn't gone away, and I want to reassure you that your child's safety has been at the forefront of our decision making throughout this situation and will continue to be our primary consideration going forwards, along with our duty of care to them, the staff and the wider community.

The school's guidance, and the 20+ documents, that inform our update, show a shift from the word 'must' (legally binding) to 'should' (strongly advised).

Using that guidance, a number of operational changes in school will take place:

Attendance – Attendance is mandatory for all and it is a priority.

Zones - Children will be able to be grouped flexibly depending on the activities that we are carrying out in school.

Classrooms and resources - Children will share school resources now, but must still have their own water bottle, brought in daily.

School start and finish times - The school day will continue to start at 8:40am for EYFS and KS1 and 8.50am for KS2. Entry to school will still operate according to these timings, so please do not arrive at the school gates too early. Please supervise your children when waiting outside the gates to ensure they are safe as vehicular access needs to be kept clear. The gates will be closed promptly at 9am so please make sure you arrive at school before this time. The day will continue to end at 3:05pm for EYFS and KS1 children and 3:15pm for all other children.

Face masks - You do not need to continue wearing face coverings around the school grounds, unless you choose to do so for personal reasons.

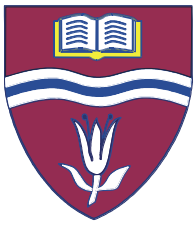
Safe hygiene - Children will continue to wash their hands regularly throughout the day. Tissues and lidded bins are in each classroom so that children can 'catch it, bin it, kill it'. Please continue to encourage this at home.

Staff - Staff have been twice weekly testing since January 2021 as directed by the DfE but, moving forward, this has now stopped as the DfE has stopped sending LFD test kits into primary schools. They will test should they feel unwell, as a proactive measure (as long as LFD tests continue to be readily available). Staff will not need to wear masks or visors in classrooms or corridors, but may choose to at other times, as a personal choice.

Unwell children - Please do not send your child to school if they have a temperature or are unwell at all. This is for the safety of everybody. If your child becomes ill whilst at school, you will be asked to collect them immediately. Please ensure that contact details are up to date with the office. If they display symptoms of COVID-19 they will be isolated until you arrive. You should then make arrangements for them to be tested, using a PCR or LFD. School should be informed of the result as soon as possible. A positive result will mean that your child will need to isolate for up to 10 days, following the latest NHS guidance and Government self-isolation advice.

Currently, if your child is unwell with other symptoms you can LFD test them and, should this be positive, you do **not** need to go for a PCR (although your child can take one if you would like them to). If your child has a positive LFD or PCR test, they should self-isolate for up to 10 days, or in line with the guidance previously sent out. The Government are keen that everybody continues to respond positively with the track and trace system. Schools are





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not legally bound to do this, but I will keep you informed of cases if they start to increase beyond a small number across the school. If the LFD is negative, we would ask that your child does not return until they are 'well'. I will monitor guidance, as we know that this will no doubt change in the coming weeks.

Know the symptoms of Covid-19 - the main symptoms of COVID-19 are a recent onset of any of the following:

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

Other symptoms linked with COVID-19 include shortness of breath, fatigue, loss of appetite, muscle ache, sore throat, headache, stuffy or runny nose, diarrhoea, nausea and vomiting.

Any of these symptoms may also have another cause.

Isolation - The guidance indicates that whilst the law has changed, the directives for public safety remain. We will follow this guidance. Therefore, isolation continues to be up to 10 days, unless you have 2 negative tests on day 5 and 6, 24 hours apart. Isolation will finish after day 5 at the earliest if you test first thing in the morning on day 5 and 6. *'Children and young people with COVID-19 should not attend their education setting while they are infectious. They should take an LFD test from 5 days after their symptoms started (or the day their test was taken if they did not have symptoms) followed by another one the next day. If both these test results are negative, they should return to their educational setting if they normally attend one, as long as they feel well enough to do so and do not have a temperature.'*

Please continue to liaise with the school office about your child's return date after testing positive, given our school protocols. We will review this as and when the guidance is further updated.

It is very important that these isolation procedures are followed by staff and children so that the risk of transmission is kept to a minimum. We have been very fortunate not to have many serious cases amongst staff and children, however, some of our staff who have tested positive have experienced severe enough symptoms to be unable to work for at least a week. If we increase the risk of infection further by allowing children and staff into school whilst still possibly infectious, we increase the risk of further staff absences.

The outcome could be cancellation of activities, as we won't be able to staff them.

Close contact changes - The new guidance has brought an end to routine contact tracing. Close contacts will no longer be required to self-isolate or advised to take daily LFD tests for 7 days. Staff, children and young people should attend their education settings as usual. *'Children and young people who usually attend an education or childcare setting and who live with someone who has COVID-19 should continue to attend the setting as normal.'*

Possible further disruption to schooling - It is almost guaranteed now that schools will remain open, but there is the very real chance that there may be further disruption to schooling for individual children who need to isolate or are unwell. Please remember that remote learning will only be provided if your child tests positive for Covid-19 and is well enough to access work. If this is the case, please contact their teacher who will endeavour to provide this at the earliest opportunity.

Any moves to remote learning for full classes will be communicated, if this is directed by Public Health. However, I think this is very unlikely. If cases rise across the school, additional measures may need to be reintroduced to reduce transmission including face coverings during drop off and pick up, reduced mixing of classes, suspension of collective worship and after school clubs - for example. If these measures are needed, I will inform you as soon as possible.

We thank you, as always, for the support you have given us whilst on this journey. Again, I assure you that whatever happens and wherever this journey continues to take us, we will always have our whole school community's very best interest at heart.

As ever, if you have any questions about any of the above please contact me head@stmarysprimarypulborough.co.uk

Kind regards,
Samantha Copus

Headteacher

