



The William Henry Smith School

4 January 2022

Dear Families

Happy New Year to you all, I hope you've had a good break over the Christmas period.

As we prepare for the students to return tomorrow, I would like to take this opportunity to remind and update families on current guidance. I know this is continually changing and can be quite confusing to us all. Indeed, it has already changed since my letter before Christmas, so I have tried to outline the bits that are relevant to families, along with a couple of important internal updates.

Covid testing at the start of term

The guidance is to continue to carry out LFD tests twice weekly for secondary age children. Schools have also been asked to again test secondary age children in school with LFDs on return to school in January which we will facilitate tomorrow. We will use consents previously given, or not, for this purpose. We then ask that families continue with this at home as previously twice weekly and continue to report the results as you were before Christmas via this link [Report a COVID-19 rapid lateral flow test result - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/report-a-covid-19-rapid-lateral-flow-test-result).

Having said that, it would seem sensible for students in year 7 and above to take a LFD test at home tonight where possible; if anyone is positive it would be better if they didn't get as far as school to find this out.

If your child does not currently participate in LFD testing and you would like them to, please contact Sara Hill our school nurse.

Covid guidance

Numbers in Calderdale are very high and these are likely to rise as schools return. Numbers will have also been affected by difficulty in obtaining tests. As you will be aware the national picture is that we have not seen the back of Covid and schools are still expected to take a range of measures to limit the spread. We sent out new guidance on actions for household contacts of confirmed cases before Christmas and below you will see this has already altered.

Positive cases

Nationally there has been a reduction in the period of self-isolation following a positive test, from 10 days to 7, if you return negative lateral flow tests on days 6 and 7 (24 hours apart). It's important to note that this is contingent on not having a raised temperature too, and return on day 8 (as opposed to day 7 if you have a negative test on day 7). It's also important to note that the following also applies: if you end your self-isolation period before 10 full days you are strongly advised:

- to limit close contact with other people outside your household, especially in crowded, enclosed or poorly ventilated spaces
- in addition to venues where it is a legal requirement, to wear a face covering in crowded, enclosed or poorly ventilated spaces and where you are in close contact with other people
- to limit contact with anyone who is at higher risk of severe illness if infected with COVID-19
- to follow the guidance on how to stay safe and help prevent the spread
- You should follow this advice until 10 full days from when your self-isolation period started.

Whilst this national guidance suggests that students can return on day 8 of their infection, if they meet the criteria, the above list means we need to exercise caution in allowing them to do so. Local guidance suggests that this may be manageable for school staff *by exception*. However, our advice from Calderdale LA is for families to keep students off for **the full 10 days** (as they are unlikely to be able to adhere to the above in the context of the normal school day). We are sure families will appreciate the rationale for this approach and our commitment to following local guidance, bearing in mind the significant numbers in Calderdale.

Contacts of positive cases

As you will probably be aware, the Government has issued new national guidance for people who have been in contact with a confirmed case of COVID-19. In summary:

- All adults who are fully vaccinated and children aged 5 to 18 years and 6 months, identified as a contact of someone with COVID-19 – whether Omicron or not – should now take a lateral flow test every day for 7 days.
- Children under five years old do not need to take part in daily testing for contacts of COVID-19 and do not need to isolate.
- Anyone over the age of 18 years and 6 months who is not vaccinated, must isolate in line with government guidelines if they are a close contact of a positive case.

However, in addition to the above, Calderdale have implemented local guidance (which was in place before Christmas) and which still applies. So, if someone in the household has tested positive for COVID-19 (on LFD or PCR), advice is that students should stay at home. If they develop symptoms, they should get a PCR test straight away. If they don't have symptoms, they should get a PCR test 3-5 days after their household member started with symptoms (or took their test if they had no symptoms). If this test is negative, the child can return to school but must stay at home and arrange another test if they go on to develop symptoms.

Face coverings

It is now recommended to use of face coverings in classrooms for secondary age and post-16 education settings, and the use of face coverings by adults in all schools in communal areas, including on dedicated school transport. This is no change for us and we appreciate that the majority of our children are exempt from this, however this remain a choice.

Staff absence

Availability of testing is also a challenge in Calderdale (along with the rest of the country) at the moment. There is a shortage of both PCR tests and LFD tests. This is likely to impact upon school, and we will keep families informed of any changes or flexibility needed.

Other non-Covid updates:

Nut Free

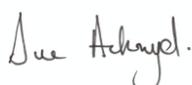
From this term we will be becoming a nut free 'ingredient' school. To this end we ask that students are not sent in with any products containing nuts. For any further guidance on this matter please contact Sara Hill our school nurse.

Autumn Term Newsletter

Families should have received a digital link to last term's newsletter, which will have provided a more visual idea of some of things that have been happening in school last term. I am sure you will agree there are so many positives to celebrate.

Finally, we would like to thank you for your ongoing support. We're sure that whilst we continue to review our policies and make sensible and prudent decisions for the safety of our community, we will all also be approaching the new term with our usual enthusiasm to get back to school. As always, we're here to work with you wherever support is required.

Best wishes,



Sue Ackroyd
Principal

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