

18<sup>th</sup> July 2021

Dear Parents and Carers,

### **Coronavirus Update 47**

As if to remind us what an extraordinary period this school year has been, 2020 - 2021 is closing with a very challenging episode. Over the past nine days the school has learned of 26 new cases and no fewer than 259 of your sons and daughters have been asked to self-isolate. In addition, we find ourselves with 14 staff unable to come to work.

It is against this background that I am reporting a radical change in national policy. In step with the Prime Minister's decision to relax many of the current restrictions, on Monday 19<sup>th</sup> July the Department for Education is also altering the requirements for those at school and their families.

I received notice of these changes on Thursday evening. They are described in an official letter which I am asked to distribute to you all. You will find it below this letter.

You will see that from tomorrow the responsibility for identifying close contacts passes to the NHS Test and Trace system. After tomorrow, if a PCR test on your child returns a positive result, you should continue to let us know but from that stage we will all wait to see who is being told to self-isolate. That work will be in the hands of Track and Trace.

There are also important changes to the implications for families of those identified as close contacts. They come into effect on the 16<sup>th</sup> August and I leave you to absorb them from the official letter.

The school play will its part in implementing these new arrangements as it is obliged to do, but I implement them with a degree of anxiety. Throughout the pandemic I have tried to be frank with families about matters of public health and it is in the spirit that I share these observations.

The tracing of close contact has been a significant part of our work this year, not least during episodes such as the one which is currently underway. I would not claim that we have done it faultlessly. But I remain to be convinced that the staff of Test and Trace, operating over the telephone and without timetables, seating plans or any knowledge of our site, can reliably and identify every one of a student's close contacts over a period of 48 hours.

That, however it is for the future. Any system that helps to contain the virus within the school and its wider community will have our wholehearted support.

Yours sincerely,



Natalie Waters

## **Letter from Department for Education to Parents and Carers**

Dear [parent/carer/guardian]

### **Re: Changes to contact tracing in education and childcare settings**

As you know, the Prime Minister announced on 12 July that Step 4 of the roadmap would go ahead on 19 July. One of the key changes that will take place from 19 July is that education and childcare settings will no longer be asked to conduct routine contact tracing. As with positive cases in any other setting, NHS Test and Trace will work with either the positive case – or in the case of children – the parents, carers or guardian of the positive case to identify close contacts.

NHS Test and Trace already manages the contact tracing process for the rest of society – including children who have recorded a positive PCR test – and has expertise in supporting people to identify close contacts.

This letter sets out in more detail below how that process will work and what you need to do if your child tests positive for COVID-19.

#### Self-isolating and taking a test

1. If your child has symptoms, they and other members of the household should self-isolate – and you should inform their education or childcare setting. You should immediately order a PCR test for them. If the PCR result is negative, they and other members of their household can stop self-isolating (unless instructed to self-isolate for other reasons). If the PCR result is positive, they, other members of their household and any close contacts identified by NHS Track and Trace must self-isolate until 10 days after the onset of symptoms.
2. If your child has a positive result from a lateral flow device (LFD) test, they and other members of the household should self-isolate – and you should inform their education or childcare setting. You should immediately order a confirmatory PCR test. If the confirmatory test is taken within two days and the result is negative, they and other members of their household can stop self-isolating (unless instructed to self-isolate for other reasons). If the confirmatory PCR test is positive (or is taken more than two days after the LFD), other members of their household and any close contacts identified by NHS Track and Trace must self-isolate until 10 days after the LFD test.
3. PCR tests can be booked online through the [NHS Test & Trace website](#) or by calling 119.
4. PCR test results will be recorded with NHS Test and Trace automatically, but you should also communicate the result to the education or childcare setting during term time or summer provision.

### Contact tracing

5. If your child gets a positive PCR test result, NHS Test and Trace will contact you, using the details you registered when ordering the PCR test. You and/or your child will be asked a series of specific questions designed to identify who your child has been in close contact with. Being in an education or childcare setting with someone who has tested positive for COVID-19 will not necessarily mean a person is identified as a close contact.
6. You will be asked to provide the contact details, if you know them, of any of the individuals – or their parents or guardians – who have been identified as close contacts. NHS Test and Trace will then get in touch with these close contacts and provide appropriate instructions or advice (see below).

### Self-isolation and/or testing of close contacts

7. At present, anyone identified as a close contact is legally required to self-isolate and must not attend their education or childcare setting (the only exception is if they are participating in a daily contact testing trial). Anyone identified as a non-household close contact by NHS Track and Trace must self-isolate until 10 days after the date of their most recent contact with that person. If they live in the same household, they must self-isolate until 10 days after the date of that person developing symptoms (see point 1 above) or, if that person was asymptomatic, the date of their test (see point 2 above). NHS Test and Trace will notify you of the day on which the self-isolation period ends.
8. Close contacts are also advised to take a PCR test. If the test result is negative, they must still complete the full self-isolation period, as the test will not detect all positive cases. If the result is positive, they will need to self-isolate for a further 10 days – and NHS Test and Trace will contact them to identify any close contacts.
9. **From 16 August**, if the close contact is under 18, they will not have to self-isolate (in line with the policy for fully vaccinated adults) but will be asked to take a PCR test immediately, other than for very young children identified as non-household contacts, and they will not need to self-isolate while awaiting the results of the test. If the PCR test is positive, they will be required to self-isolate for 10 days from the date of the test. NHS Test and Trace will then get in touch to identify close contacts (see points 5 and 6 above). Further guidance on these changes to self-isolation will be provided shortly.