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Date 26th March 2021

Letter to Derbyshire Schools

Dear Parents and Carers,

Firstly, I'd like to thank you for all you are doing to help prevent the spread of COVID-19 and encourage you to continue with your efforts to protect yourself, your loved ones and the whole school community. You are making a real difference.

I appreciate that we have been living under restrictions for many months now and it is challenging to maintain motivation. What you are doing by following the guidelines has made a big difference and enabled Derbyshire to reduce the rates of infection. However, we all need to be vigilant and remember to follow the guidelines to help to keep us all safe and prevent the spread of the virus in our communities.

We know that some children and young people with COVID-19 might not initially experience the three main symptoms (new continuous cough, loss of or change in smell or taste, or a high temperature), with some experiencing other symptoms such as nausea, headache, extreme tiredness or muscle aches. Please continue to be vigilant and do not send your child to school if they are unwell.

There are things we can all do to help reduce the risk of you and anyone you live with getting ill with COVID-19. As Director of Public Health for Derbyshire I would urge all parents and carers to follow the national guidance to help keep everyone safe:



I'd also ask you to consider wearing a face covering when dropping off and collecting your children as an additional measure to help reduce the risk of COVID-19 spreading. This doesn't replace social distancing, but is an extra recommendation to reduce the potential risk of transmission.

What to do if your child is identified as a contact

If your child is identified as a contact of someone in school who has tested positive for COVID-19, they must stay at home and self-isolate until 10 days after contact. School will advise you on the end date for this self-isolation period. Other members of your household can continue normal activities provided that your child, and others in your household, do not develop COVID-19 symptoms.

What to do if you or your child develops COVID-19 symptoms

If your child develops one or more of the main symptoms of COVID-19 (new continuous cough, high temperature, or a change or loss of sense of taste or smell), they must not come to school and should stay at home and self-isolate until 10 days from the day after their symptoms started.

Anyone with symptoms should arrange a PCR test via https://www.gov.uk/get-coronavirus-test or by calling 119. **All other household members must stay at home and not leave the house for 10 days.** This means staying at home and not going to work, school or college, or any public areas. This includes anyone in your support bubble or childcare bubble. Please inform the school at the earliest opportunity if your child has symptoms or has tested positive.

If you have possible or confirmed COVID-19 you will need to self-isolate. If you test positive for COVID-19 or are alerted by NHS Test and Trace that you are a contact of a confirmed COVID-19 case you are legally required to self-isolate. Fines are in place for those breaking the rules starting at £1,000 and increasing up to £10,000 for repeat offenders.

Advice and support is available if you are in self-isolation due to coronavirus. If NHS Test and Trace have alerted you to self-isolate, you could be eligible for a support payment of £500. Practical help is also available to help to self-isolate if you don't have family or friends to support you. Further details are available at the link below:

https://www.derbyshire.gov.uk/social-health/health-and-wellbeing/health-protection/disease-control/coronavirus/emotional-health-and-wellbeing/support-in-self-isolation

Accessing testing if you do not have COVID-19 symptoms

One in three of those with COVID-19 do not have any symptoms, meaning that they could be passing on the virus to anyone they meet. People without COVID-19 symptoms can get a rapid (lateral flow) test as part of a testing scheme.

Secondary school students have been asked to take three rapid (lateral flow) tests at their place of study under the supervision of a trained operator and a fourth test themselves using a home test kit. Students will then continue taking twice-weekly tests using a home test kit provided by their school or college. They should report all results to NHS Test and Trace as soon as the test is completed, either online or by telephone, as set out in the home test kit instructions.

Households and childcare or support bubbles of school children can now also access rapid (lateral flow) testing (by post or collection from testing sites). Children of primary school age or younger will not be asked to test via this route at this time. Further details at the link below:

Households and bubbles of pupils, students and staff of schools, nurseries and colleges: get rapid lateral flow tests - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

Community testing sites are also available across Derbyshire. You don't need to book, just turn up at a time convenient to you. Testing is available to those aged 11 or over. Please make sure that anyone aged under 16 is accompanied by a parent or guardian. Further details at the link below:

https://www.derbyshire.gov.uk/social-health/health-and-wellbeing/health-protection/disease-control/coronavirus/community-testing/community-testing-for-covid-19.aspx

Secondary students – when to wear a face covering

Current guidance recommends that face coverings should be worn by staff and students in years 7 and above when moving around school. This includes outside of classrooms, such as in corridors and communal areas where social distancing cannot easily be maintained. Face coverings do not need to be worn by students when outdoors on the premises.

The guidance now also recommends that for students in years 7 and above, face coverings should be worn in classrooms unless social distancing can be maintained. This does not apply in situations where wearing a face covering would impact on the ability to take part in exercise or strenuous activity, for example in PE lessons.

Some individuals are exempt from wearing a face covering. Please see the link below for further details:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/967285/Face_coverings_in_education-March-2021.pdf

For the latest Government guidance on coronavirus visit www.gov.uk/coronavirus.

Thank you all for working with us and your school to continue to keep each other safe. Together we can make such a difference.

Yours sincerely



Dean Wallace
Director of Public Health