



St Ippolyts C.E. (Aided) Primary School

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Dear Parents,

I do hope you all managed to have a good Christmas and I wish you all a very Happy New Year. I am sure that, like me, you have been awaiting any government update on schools for the coming term. The new guidance has been published over the weekend and I am writing today with important information regarding the return to school on Thursday. **Please do take the time to read it carefully;** I will also upload it onto the school website so that you can find it easily if you need to.

Start of term

School will reopen to all pupils as planned from Thursday 6th January 2022.

Bubbles

In order to return cautiously following the significant mixing of families and travel over the Christmas break, we will be initially returning into our 'double bubble' arrangement, the same as we were operating at the end of term. **However, there will be no staggered timings, so the start and finish times for all classes will remain the same for everyone (8.45am and 3.15pm).**

One slight amendment is that children within each double bubble will be able to play together at breaktimes (outdoors only).

This approach will be in place over the month of January in the first instance. We will be monitoring the situation closely during this time and providing we are not in an outbreak, aim to return to our usual timetable in February.

Face coverings

We are continuing to request that parents wear face coverings on the school run please.

Clothing

Please ensure that your child is dressed in warm layers as the classroom doors and windows will be open for ventilation. PE will take place outdoors as much as possible, so children will also need suitable outdoor kit.

Handwashing and hygiene

This continues to be a crucial element of our infection control and we will be re-teaching the children about effective handwashing techniques when term starts. Each classroom has a supply of E45 lotion if children get sore hands in the colder weather.

IMPORTANT: symptoms, testing, close contacts and isolation (information taken from the schools guidance for January 2022)

Symptoms:

Pupils, staff and other adults should not come into school if they have symptoms, have had a positive test result or other reasons requiring them to stay at home due to the risk of them passing on COVID-19 (for example, they are required to quarantine). **If anyone in your school develops COVID-19 symptoms, however mild, you should send them home.**

Self-isolation for positive cases:

Individuals may now take LFD tests on day 6 and day 7 of their self-isolation period. Those who receive two negative test results are no longer required to complete 10 full days of self-isolation. The first test must be taken no earlier than day 6 of the self-isolation period and tests must be taken 24 hours apart. This also applies to children under 5, with LFD testing at parental or guardian discretion.

If both these test results are negative, and you do not have a high temperature, you may end your self-isolation after the second negative test result and return to your education setting from day 8.

Anyone who is unable to take LFD tests will need to complete the full 10 day period of self-isolation.

Asymptomatic screening using lateral flow tests:

Testing remains important in reducing the risk of transmission of infection within schools. Staff and secondary school pupils should continue to test twice weekly at home, with lateral flow device (LFD) test kits, 3-4 days apart.

Schools are strongly encouraged to ask parents and other visitors to take a lateral flow device (LFD) test before entering the school.

There is no need for primary age pupils (those in year 6 and below) to regularly test, unless they have been identified as a contact for someone who has tested positive for Covid-19 and therefore advised to take lateral flow tests every day for 7 days.

PCR Testing

Staff and pupils with a positive LFD test result should self-isolate in line with the stay at home guidance for households with possible or confirmed coronavirus (COVID-19) infection. They will also need to get a PCR test to check if they have COVID-19.

Whilst awaiting the PCR result, the individual should continue to self-isolate. If the PCR test is taken within 2 days of the positive lateral flow test, and is negative, it overrides the self-test LFD test and the pupil can return to school, as long as the individual doesn't have COVID-19 symptoms.

Close contacts

From 14 December 2021, **adults who are fully vaccinated and all children and young people aged between 5 and 18 years and 6 months identified as a contact of someone with COVID-19 are strongly advised to take a LFD test every day for 7 days and continue to attend their setting as normal, unless they have a positive test result.**

Daily testing of close contacts applies to all contacts who are:

- fully vaccinated adults – people who have had 2 doses of an approved vaccine
- all children and young people aged 5 to 18 years and 6 months, regardless of their vaccination status
- people who are not able to get vaccinated for medical reasons
- people taking part, or have taken part, in an approved clinical trial for a COVID-19 vaccine

Children under 5 years are exempt from self-isolation and do not need to take part in daily testing of close contacts.

You will remember from our outbreak before Christmas, that the majority of our positive cases were asymptomatic, meaning that they did not show any signs of illness at all. This illustrates just how difficult it is to be able to eliminate the risk of the virus entering school. It was only through the cooperation of you all as parents that we managed to get through the situation relatively unscathed.

One of the biggest challenges we face is staff absence, which is why I am asking for your continued vigilance and cooperation to keep them safe and at school. Whilst we will do everything possible to keep school fully open with face-to-face lessons for all children, if we have a situation where we have a high level of staff absence, there could come a point when we would have to close a class/bubble and switch to remote learning for a period of time. This is a scenario that I am certain we all want to avoid.

As with last term, we will provide learning via Google Classroom if children are Covid-positive and are self-isolating at home.

Finally, just a few reminders:

- Please ensure all children have their PE bags and pencil cases on the first day of term.
- We aim to resume swimming for Years 3 and 4 as planned but will continue to monitor the situation closely and update you if necessary.
- **Please ensure that we have your correct contact details.** All communications and newsletters are sent by email and text message so please make sure we have the best number to contact you on.

I sincerely hope that there are no last-minute changes like we had last year, so unless you hear from me again, we look forward to seeing you all on Thursday for the start of term.

Kind regards

RPeddie

Mrs RE Peddie
Headteacher

