

Otterham C P School

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Dear Parents

Firstly, I would like to wish you all the very best for the year ahead and hope it is a happy and healthy one! Unfortunately, 'Happy New Year' seems somewhat inappropriate (almost sarcastic), as we enter the year with the increasing uncertainty surrounding the ongoing impact of COVID. I am aware that a number of families have had their Christmas celebrations hampered by the virus and in some cases, the disruption continues.

You will have no doubt heard/read the latest government guidance (DfE 02/01/22) on schools remaining open (which we fully support) and how best to achieve this should staffing levels present a problem.

'We recognise that the high rates of COVID-19 may cause difficulties with the availability of staff. Our shared priority is to keep education settings open and children and young people continuing face-to-face education. Where workforce issues arise, you may wish to use existing teaching, temporary and support staff more flexibly where required to ensure your setting remains open, whilst ensuring that you continue to have appropriate support in place for pupils with SEND. As pupils do not need to be kept in consistent groups, you may wish to consider combining classes.'

Here at Otterham we will be doing everything possible to maintain face-to-face education but as parents, you need to be aware that the situation could arise whereby remote/home learning would need to be reintroduced, albeit for a short period of time. This would most likely take the form of signposting to various websites/online learning resources as logically in this situation, the class teacher and TAs would be ill at home. This would be very much a worst-case scenario.

The latest rules on self-isolation following a positive test are as follows (DfE 02/01/22):-

'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.'

People who are fully vaccinated, or children and young people aged between 5 and 18 years and 6 months, identified as a close contact of someone with COVID-19, should take an LFD test every day for seven days and continue to attend their setting as normal, unless they have a positive test result or develop symptoms at any time.

Children under 5 are not being advised to take part in daily testing of close contacts. If a child under 5 is a contact of a confirmed case, they are not required to self-isolate and should not start daily testing. If they live in the same household as someone with COVID-19 they should limit their contact with anyone who is at higher risk of severe illness if infected with COVID-19, and arrange to take a PCR test as soon as possible. They can continue to attend an education or childcare setting while waiting for the PCR result. If the test is positive, they should follow the stay at home guidance.'

Continued/

We understand that the guidance is not a 'one size fits all' and so are willing to work with each family's individual circumstances with regards to your child's attendance and whether it's appropriate to provide work for home.

I do hope the above information provides some clarity but please do not hesitate to make contact should you require any further information.

On a more positive and upbeat note, class teachers will be sharing their plans for teaching and learning for the term ahead very shortly. We hope any disruption we may have will be kept to a minimum and the children continue to enjoy their learning and experiences.

As always, any questions, please do not hesitate to ask.

Kindest regards

Helen Ward