

14<sup>th</sup> January 2022

Dear Parents and Carers,

### **Covid Isolation Rules Update**

Thank you for your ongoing support in what is a very demanding time. You may be aware that this week we have had to take the difficult decision to close some classes. The decision to close a class is only ever made as a last resort - if there are either two or more confirmed cases of COVID (a threshold for a special school), or if there are insufficient staffing levels for that class to remain safely open. We wanted to reassure you that this decision is never an easy one, nor one we take in isolation. We, as a special school, have daily contact with Public Health England. Your child's safety and well-being is at the heart of all we do. The situation is literally changing on a minute by minute basis as lateral flow and PCR results come in.

Recently, Colin Cox, Cumbria's Director of Public Health, sent out a letter to all schools with guidance for primary aged students who are household contacts of positive cases. We have spoken to PHE Cumbria about the letter and the relevance to special school settings. As a result, we have had the following response that we want to share with you:

*"As part of their general health and safety responsibilities, a Head Teacher can ask an individual not to attend the setting if, in their reasonable judgement, they feel it is necessary to protect other pupils and staff from possible infection with COVID-19. These types of decisions require careful consideration in light of all the circumstances and current public health advice. In the case of SEND settings, circumstances to be considered may include, for example, the ability of an individual to be tested and maintain social distancing, as well as the impact that a COVID-19 infection may have on other individuals in the setting who have health conditions that put them at greater risk of severe illness. They may also extend the enhanced guidance to other pupils (older than primary-school age) in their setting where their risk assessment deems it appropriate.*

*Therefore, following careful risk assessment, some special educational needs settings may choose to advise household close contacts to stay at home for 5 days (rather than LFD test)."*

With this in mind, we are asking students who have a household member who is positive, to remain at home for at least 5 days and where possible take a PCR test before returning to school. Even if your child has already had Covid-19, PHE Cumbria have shared that the new variant is highly transmissible. It is felt that at least 75% of household contacts are likely to go on to contract the virus from a positive case in the home. The recommended 5-day isolation and precautionary PCR tests have been put in place to keep our school community safe.

Many thanks for your continued cooperation. Take care and stay safe.

**Sam Kidd, Stephen Chambers, Carolyn Westnedge, Shelley Crowe**

