

## COVID UPDATE 24.11.21

Dear parents/ carers,

Today we had ten pupils absent from school due to being positive for COVID-19. Four of these cases are in Year 5 and three are in Year 2. There is also a case in each of Y1, Y3 and Y4. Parents of children in those classes will have received communication from the school office about these.

When there are multiple cases such as these, there are thresholds at which schools seek further public health advice. St Mary's has now met the threshold in both Y2 and Y5. The threshold being 10% of the class.

We took advice from Lancashire COVID Outbreak Management, Education Public Health and Wellbeing team earlier. We have been advised to consider further measures in addition to those already in place to prevent a wider outbreak.

Following that consultation, this is a summary of what we are now doing:

### *Testing*

1. Routine LFD testing, **twice weekly**, is strongly encouraged across school and families to identify asymptomatic cases. As you know, test kits are widely available for free. Please contact school office if unsure where.
2. We are asking all staff and children in classes where there has been a positive case to take a PCR test.
3. NEW: We are now asking children and staff in classes where the threshold has been reached (i.e. Y2 and Y5) to take **daily** LFD tests, in addition.
4. We are asking all members of households where there has been a positive case to take a PCR test.
5. NEW: We are also asking for **daily** LFD testing of all those in households where there has been a positive case.
6. Children and staff who show symptoms of COVID-19 should not be in school until well. If a negative PCR is obtained then they can return when well. If positive, they can return on the 11<sup>th</sup> day after symptoms started. Please check with the office if unsure.

### *Symptoms*

The main symptoms are:

*a high temperature – this means you feel hot to touch on your chest or back (you do not need to measure your temperature)*

*a new, continuous cough – this means coughing a lot for more than an hour, or 3 or more coughing episodes in 24 hours (if you usually have a cough, it may be worse than usual)*

As you will understand, in order to minimise the chance of a wider outbreak, we are taking no chances with coughs, at the moment, even though we are aware that in most cases they will most likely be normal winter bugs.

Please do not send your child in with a cough as described above and if they are sent home because of a cough, please arrange for them to have a PCR test. My apologies for the inconvenience I know this causes and please bear with us.

*a loss or change to your sense of smell or taste – this means you've noticed you cannot smell or taste anything, or things smell or taste different to normal*

#### *Ventilation*

7. We are maximising ventilation in classrooms and around the building. We have CO2 monitors in each classroom and staff are using these to ensure that there is a good flow of air. We have been using these for about a week; they show that ventilation in classrooms is actually very good. As doors and windows will probably be open during much of the school day, I would like to remind you that children may bring warm jumpers to wear over their uniforms in class.
8. If we can do certain activities outside, we are. E.g. Mrs Grandi was carrying out 1:1 phonics assessments outdoors with Y2 children today.

#### *Groups mixing*

9. Since September there has been minimal mixing across year groups – just in small phonics groups and Breakfast and After School Club. For now, we have returned to smaller groups in Breakfast Club and After School Club as we did last year e.g. YN & YR, Y1 & Y2, Y&Y4 and Y5&Y6.
10. Our gatherings and assemblies remain online.

#### *Cleaning*

11. Regular daily cleaning is taking place including focusing on touch points and shared equipment.

Having spoken with the public health team yesterday, I talked about activities that we would very much like to carry on with in the coming weeks e.g. the EYFS and KS1 theatre visit to see *The Stick Man* at the Lowry and PTFA's Breakfast with Santa event. The sentiment I got from the team was that they want to support schools continuing with these activities and events. Our intention therefore, is to go ahead with these but depending on case numbers we may need to review that standpoint.

If cases continue to be above the threshold and there is an increase in virus transmission in other classes over the next week or so, then we will need to take further measures as advised by Lancashire Public Health.

I realise that we are asking a lot of families here, but I hope you understand the reasons for that. I would like to thank you once again for the excellent cooperation, support and understanding you have shown over the last couple of years during the pandemic, for the measures we have taken to keep the school community as safe as possible.

Yours sincerely,

Patrick Smyth

Headteacher