



Cookstown High School
Combined Grammar & Secondary School

22nd November 2021

Dear Parent/Carer,

Re: Covid-19

I am writing to remind you of the arrangements for contact tracing, current Covid mitigations and Home Learning for those pupils who have been advised to self-isolate.

As you will be aware the arrangements surrounding contact tracing changed on 10th September, the Department of Education informed all schools that the PHA is now leading on all contact tracing and that schools should not seek to identify close contacts or take any follow up action unless requested to do so by the PHA. Schools have been asked not to send pupils home or ask them to self-isolate as close contacts. PHA will take forward contact tracing and identification.

If pupils present with Covid symptoms or have a positive Lateral Flow test, they should remain at home and book a PCR test. If the results are positive, parents should inform the school and PHA who will identify close contacts.

The following is recent guidance issued by the PHA:

- Daily Lateral Flow Device (LFD) testing will be recommended for Post Primary School pupils who are identified by PHA as household close contacts. The tests should be taken before going to school each day in the period following receipt of their initial negative PCR test result (which enables a return to school) up until receipt of a negative Day 8 PCR.
- In the event of an outbreak/cluster in a post primary school setting and following a risk assessment and advice from the Public Health Agency, pupils and staff in an identified group may be asked to take a one-off LFD test (in addition to their ongoing LFD twice weekly asymptomatic testing) prior to returning to class. This will replace the existing recommendation to undertake a one-off PCR test in such circumstances.
- Post-primary pupils and special school staff will be encouraged to get their supply of tests for this purpose from local pharmacies, the Lateral Flow Device (LFD) direct postal service, or from local walk-through test sites, but we recognise that pupils who already have school-provided test kits in their homes for use in the regular asymptomatic LFD testing programme might use those for convenience.

I would like to reassure that we have a robust set of mitigations that are rigorously implemented across the school, and I would appreciate it, if you could remind your son/daughter of these safeguards. The following mitigations are successfully implemented to safeguard all members of our community.

- Pupils and staff wear face coverings in communal areas, including classrooms.
- Seating plans are updated regularly, should they be requested by PHA for contact tracing.
- Handwashing is timetabled twice a day, at the end of lessons and pupils are encouraged to wash their hands at break and lunch time.
- Hand sanitiser is provided in each classroom across the school.



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- All classrooms are ventilated and windows and/or doors are open.
- Social Distancing is encouraged.
- Staff wipe down desks and keyboards at the end of each lesson.
- A one-way system is in place to avoid any unnecessary contact.
- We operate three distinct lunch times, where only one year group at a time is permitted in the Canteen.
- Pupils are allocated distinct designated areas for each year group to use at break and lunch.
- Pupils are taught in distinct groups where possible and each year group is considered by the Department of Education as a distinct bubble group.
- The Lateral Flow testing programme is open to all pupils and staff, testing should be conducted on a Sunday and Wednesday evening.

As you will be aware that Practical lessons resumed in September and this recommencement is based on guidance received from DE in August, which states; "Passing briefly in the corridor or playground is low risk and is not considered close contact. It is no longer appropriate for post primary pupils to receive teaching and learning in a single base classroom with limited access to specialist accommodation."

In addition, it should be noted that if pupils must self-isolate, class work will be placed on Microsoft Teams or Google Classroom, this will ensure that pupils are able to keep up to date with classwork. It is not practical, nor should it be expected for Teachers to teach their classes face to face and online simultaneously. Remote learning would only be implemented in the event of local or wider school closures, or that a large group of pupils within the class need to self-isolate.

I would like to thank you all for your ongoing support.

Yours sincerely,

Mr A McGeown
Vice-Principal (Curriculum)