



The Wee Friday Note

Friday 7th January 2022



“Stay positive. Better days are on their way”

Dear Parents,

This will be a rather short Friday note due to my letter shared on Wednesday 5th January that set out arrangements for our return earlier this week.

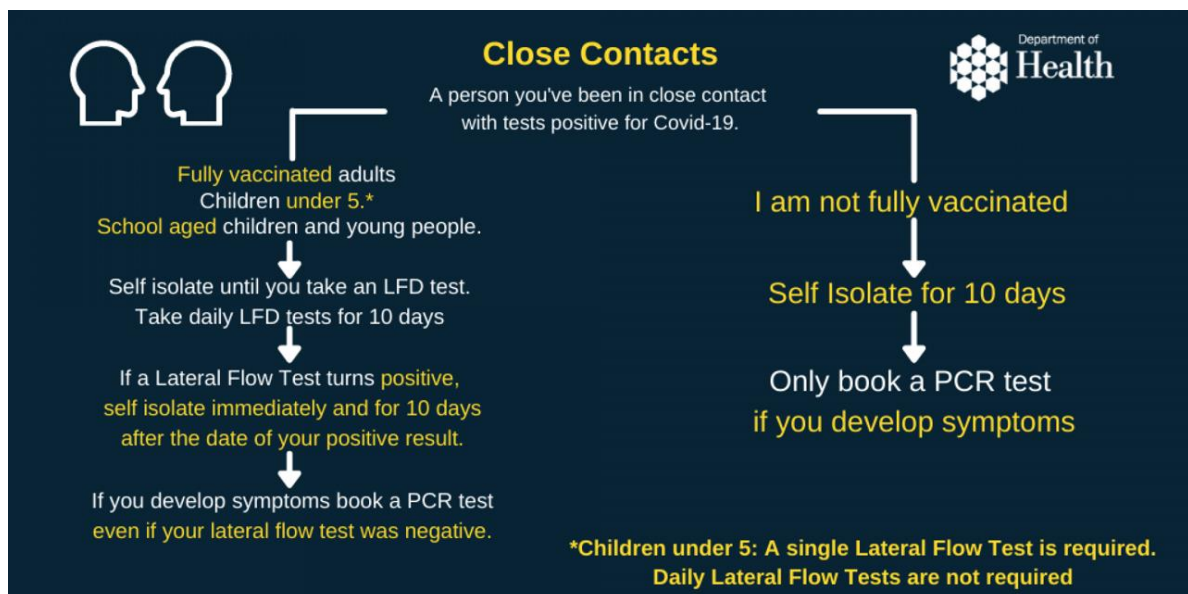
It was a pleasure to welcome the girls and boys back to school on Thursday morning. It was clear from the moment the school bell rang that many children were going to be absent. While there will be mixed reasons for this, the impact of Covid/Omicron has to be a considerable factor. On both Thursday and today we had 23% of children off.

School staff will be trying very hard to make school feel as close to ‘normal’ as we can. It is going to be a bumpy few weeks head.

1. COVID

There have been a few changes to the management of Covid in NI over recent days. Most of these changes are to do with changes to testing.

- From this week, a PCR is no longer required to confirm a positive Lateral Flow Test (LFT).
- PCR tests should still be booked and taken if someone has Covid symptoms.
- LFT tests are therefore to be used by children and adults who aren't showing any symptoms but think they may have Covid: in other words, Close Contacts or people who need to check on a daily/regular basis that they are Covid-free.



Other rules affecting schools remain identical to what they were before Christmas:

- Children who are sick with anything should not be sent to school. This is especially important right now as the Omicron variant of Covid is even more contagious than previous variants. So, the golden rule of “If in doubt, keep them out” is even more important than ever.

- Therefore, I am strongly encouraging parents to keep children off school if they display **any** of the following 5 possible symptoms:
 - Raised temperature above 37.8oC
 - A persistent cough
 - Loss of sense of taste or smell

Add to this list two additional symptoms common with Omicron:

- Runny nose
 - Headache
- If your child has any of these 5 symptoms, you should still try and book a PCR test for them - because they have possible symptoms.
 - Until the worst of Omicron's impact has passed, parents need to help schools stay open by keeping potentially sick kids off; getting them tested when & how appropriately; and keep communicating with school about what's going on with their children.

2. Staying warm while at school

Primary schools have very few mitigations at their disposal to help fight against Covid. One of the most important mitigations is to keep classrooms well ventilated by keeping their windows open – even though it's January. School's underfloor heating is on but it is still cool in classes for children and staff. Therefore, please make sure your children have enough layers of clothing on to keep themselves warm. A vest, a t-shirt worn under school polo shirts can make a real difference. Children may also wear a fleece or similar top over their school sweater if needed.

3. After-school clubs

Obviously we are very restricted with what we can do by way of after-school clubs. We had reintroduced football after Halloween. However, we feel that due to the freezing cold January weather, the need to keep any mixing of classes outside it is wisest to postpone restarting football until after January; when hopefully the worst of Omicron will have passed. We look forward to restarting our full programme of co-curricular activities as soon as it is reasonably safe to do so: this will include things such as enlarging our Breakfast Club, Choir, Eco Club, Two2Three Waiting Club for P1s & P2s, hockey, Coding/Computer Club and many more besides.

4. School Fund

Believe it or not, I try to ask parents for as little money as possible! Over the last two years, Cregagh Primary has had very little opportunities to raise any additional school funds. I would be very grateful if any families who haven't already paid School Fund do so whenever possible (I understand it may not be possible this month; so soon after Christmas). School will also be planning a few sponsored fund-raising events for pupils to participate in in the spring term.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Monday 14 th to Friday 18 th February	Half-term holiday (5 school days)
Thursday 17 th March	St. Patrick's Day. School closed
Friday 18 th March	School holiday (1 school day)
Friday 8 th April	Spring Term ends. School closes at 12 noon
Monday 11 th April to Friday 22 nd April	Easter holiday (10 school days)
Monday 25 th April	Summer term begins

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