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**PARENT INFORMATON REGARDING ADDITIONAL MEASURES IN SCHOOL.**

There has been a large increase in the number of children and young people in County Durham testing positive for COVID-19 and the highest case rates are in school age children. This is leading to spread of COVID-19 within families and into older age groups.

The increase in COVID-19 cases in children is disrupting their education, affecting schools and has an impact on the wider community.

We have already implemented the recommendations from Durham County Council’s Public Health team such as increased ventilation, increased handwashing, staggered break times and staggered entry and exit points but also require your help to ensure that we can keep school cases to a minimum. **We ask that you do not send your children to school when they are unwell.** The symptoms of Covid in children are not consistent and can vary from sore throats, stomach pains to high temperatures and cold like sniffles. We are seeing higher than ever numbers of children who are attending school with coughs, colds, sore throats and temperatures and we are required to send these children home. We recommend that children who are unwell have a PCR test before returning to school to help minimise the spread of any infections. As parents ourselves, we recognise the huge impact of having to keep a child at home but in these challenging times we also need to protect the wider school community and feel it is a small inconvenience compared to reintroducing staggered start times and a full bubble system like we had last year. Increasing numbers will also lead to further implications- an increasing number of schools are cancelling all Christmas performance activities due to the number of cases in school- please help us to keep our numbers low by keeping unwell children at home and taking them for PCR tests.

**In addition to this the new guidance is:**

· PCR testing for all adults and pupils if they are a close contact of a positive case in their household.

· Daily LFD (lateral Flow Device) testing at home for 7 days for any adult or pupil in Key Stage 2 (Year 3 or above) who is a household contact of a positive case and is exempt from isolation and continues to attend school. Testing should start from the day the household member has symptoms or if they don’t have symptoms from when they tested positive.

\*Note: People who have tested positive with a PCR test within the last 90 days should not be encouraged to test unless they develop new symptoms

Please be reassured that for most people, coronavirus (COVID-19) will be a mild illness.

**LFD Testing advice**

We would recommend you have a supply of LFD testing kits at home in the event you are requested to use them. You can order home testing kits to be delivered to your home here www.gov.uk/order-coronavirus-rapid-lateral-flow-tests

Or you can collect LFD kits at Community Collect sites across the County, including many pharmacies. To find your nearest collection point please look online. We do hold a very small number of LFD test kits in cases of emergency.

**What to do if your child develops symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19) or tests positive for COVID-19**

Some common symptoms of COVID-19 are recent onset of:

· new continuous cough and/or

· high temperature and/or

· a loss of, or change in, normal sense of taste or smell (anosmia)

However, please be aware that children do not always present with all of these symptoms and other symptoms are possible. Anyone concerned about their child can request a test. If you are concerned about your child’s symptoms, you can seek advice from NHS 111 at 111.nhs.uk/ or by phoning 111.

If your child does develop symptoms, they should get a PCR test and remain at home at least until the result is known. Book a free PCR test at www.gov.uk/get-coronavirus-test . If positive, your child should isolate for 10 full days after their symptoms appeared.

If your child has a positive test result but does not have symptoms they should stay at home and self-isolate for 10 full days from the date the positive test was taken. This isolation period will be extended if they go on to develop symptoms by counting 10 full days from the day following their symptom onset.

**Help, support, and further information.**

To help you comply with the requirement to self-isolate, the County Durham Together Community Hub can provide access to essential supplies, financial support and emotional support as well as other services. Please visit www.durham.gov.uk/covid19help or call the Community Hub on 03000 260260 for further details.

There is also support available the coronavirus section via [www.durhamlocate.org.uk](http://www.durhamlocate.org.uk)