



3.2.2022

## Staffing Challenges

Dear Parents and Carers

We are currently experiencing a high level of staff sickness absence. A number of these absences are due to COVID-19, however most are due to other illnesses. We have sought support from staffing agencies, however they are experiencing the same issues, so much so that when our regular agency team members have been absent, they have been unable to cover them, let alone provide additional staff.

In light of this, since Friday 28<sup>th</sup> January, we have had to reduce the number of children in school, in accordance with our published priorities. This has been a very difficult decision to make. It has been particularly challenging because we have had to assess staffing levels on a day by day basis to ensure that we remain within safe ratios. Staff that are available to work are doing all possible to ensure that the absence of their colleagues does not have a detrimental impact on the children that have remained in provision; this is particularly important for the children that started with us in January and are still settling in.

We are speaking to many families at the moment that are finding it difficult to keep up with the changing COVID-19 rules. The current position is:

- If you or your child test positive on a home lateral flow test, **without** experiencing symptoms, immediate isolation is required. A PCR (lab) test will **not** be required.
- The isolation period will be for a minimum of 5 days. Day 1 of the isolation period is to be counted as the day *after* symptoms start, or the day *after* the positive lateral flow test, if no symptoms are experienced. If further lateral flow tests are negative on days 5 and 6, the child may return to school on day 6. If either are positive, isolation continues until there are 2 consecutive negative tests.
- After 10 days, isolation ends, regardless of lateral flow results, unless there is an ongoing high temperature, in which case advice should be taken from your GP.
- If you are not willing or able to perform lateral flow tests on your child during the isolation period, the full 10 days of school absence will need to be observed.

If you or your child have one of the following symptoms, immediate isolation is required and a PCR (lab) test needs to be booked.



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The main symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19) 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)
- **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

**Lateral flow tests are not to be used when one or more of the above symptoms are experienced.** If the PCR confirms a COVID-19 infection, the same isolation timescale detailed in the paragraph above applies.

Children should not attend school if they are experiencing any of the above symptoms. If children display one or more of these symptoms whilst in school, we are required to isolate them from other children and send them home. You will then be required to isolate them until a negative PCR test result is obtained or the isolation period described above has been observed.

**Please ensure, therefore, that we *always* hold your up to date contact information in order that we can reach you quickly.**

It is most important that you keep us informed should you or your child experience symptoms or test positive via either a lateral flow or PCR test as we need to monitor isolation periods and, at times, liaise with Public Health Birmingham.

Thank you in anticipation of your support and understanding. We fully appreciate that some of our provisions being closed is very difficult for you, particularly when it is not always possible to give very much notice of this. We hope this unprecedented situation begins to improve very soon and we are able to return to normal service.

If we can support you in any way or you would like advice regarding testing or isolation requirements, please do not hesitate to call – (0121) 675 0362.

Yours Faithfully

David Aldworth

Executive Head Teacher

