Monday 28th February 2022

Dear Parents and Carers,

COVID-19 Update

I hope this letter finds you, your families, and friends safe and well.

As you will be aware, the government have published the updated guidance on changes they have made to the laws around COVID-19. In this letter, I have attempted to summarize the changes and how this will impact St Cuthbert's from Monday 28th February. As always, we will try and adapt and adjust to these changes in a cautious and measured way to ensure our whole school community is kept as safe as possible.

What has changed?
   1. **Masks and Face Coverings**

As shared in our newsletter dated February 18th, staff will no longer be asked to wear masks or face coverings in school. From Monday 28th February, other adults in school will no longer need to wear masks or face coverings unless they choose to do so.

   2. **Asymptomatic Testing**

For school staff, the guidance for twice weekly asymptomatic testing has now changed and it is no longer recommended. However, up until Easter and again, whilst tests are freely available, we will continue to recommend staff test at least once a week as an extra precaution.

   3. **Symptoms and Isolation**

Anyone with COVID-19 symptoms should continue to book a free NHS PCR test and follow the latest guidance.

With regards to isolation and the latest guidance, the law has now changed and it is no longer a legal obligation to isolate. However, as we understand it, the UK Health Security Agency (UKSHA) advice still remains to isolate at home for five full days if an individual has symptoms and has tested positive.

From day 5 of isolation, a lateral flow test can be taken. Two consecutive negative daily lateral flow tests are recommended before the isolation period ends.

There is no change to the advice regarding isolation, just to the law enforcing the advice.

If children are sent to school with COVID-19 symptoms or they become unwell in school with symptoms, we will be asking parents and carers to either keep them at home or to come and collect them from school. We will also be advising our families to follow all of the latest COVID-19 guidance. This is the same approach school would take for any other infectious or potentially infectious illness, for example chicken pox. This approach will help prevent the spread of COVID-19 within school which could lead to serious illness in some members of our community or staff absences which could result in class closures.

4. Contact Tracing

Routine contact tracing has now ended and reliance will be placed upon positive cases making their relevant contacts aware. Contacts will no longer be required to self-isolate or take daily tests, although, while asymptomatic kits are still freely available, testing is advisable and guidance to take extra care to keep others safe will remain.

Whilst St Cuthbert's adapts and adjusts to these changes we will continue to:
- encourage robust hygiene measures, including hand washing and cleaning routines

- ventilate all spaces used by children and staff in school

- monitor and report COVID-19 cases as required

- offer advice to families with positive cases.

I fully appreciate that these changes may result in more questions than answers. I know that some members of the school community will welcome these changes, but I also know that some may find these changes worrying. As the government implements its 'Living with COVID-19' strategy further, we will approach each phase with caution. Please know that we will always put the safety of our children and school community first in any decisions made. We will keep any changes under review and monitor COVID-19 cases in school and the local community of Kenton carefully. We are ready to step our COVID-19 measures up immediately should there be any concerns.

Thank you, as always, for your unwavering support throughout the pandemic.

If you wish to discuss any of the above further, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Best wishes,

Mrs Anne Bullerwell
Headteacher