Dear Parents/Carers

A happy New Year!  Wishing you all health and happiness in 2022!  We do hope you managed some quality time with family over Christmas and New Year. I have loved hearing all the festive holiday news this week and the excitement of Christmas morning!

For many the year has unfortunately not started with good health as we all continue to feel the impact of COVID. We have significant pupil and staff absences where pupils and staff have been unable to return to school for the start of the new term.  We look forward to welcoming them all back one day soon!

Apologies to you all if we haven’t perhaps been able to respond to emails, notes in homework diaries, answer or return telephone calls or respond to knocks at the front door as efficiently as we would like but staff absence is impacting on our ability to operate as we would wish. We are most grateful for your patience and support in these challenging days.

**You will no doubt have already established for yourselves the following but thought it might be helpful to share some key messages for you to read and re-read for clarification……**

**Self-isolation policy (including contact tracing and testing) - updated approach to high-risk contacts from 6 Jan 2022!**

**The revised requirements are, in summary:**

**Positive Cases (regardless of vaccination status)**

* must isolate for 10 days. However, if the person tests negative on day 6 and day 7 LFD tests (taken at least 24 hours apart, with the first test no earlier than day 6) they may leave isolation if they have no fever after their day 7 test.

**Fully Vaccinated Adult Contacts (NB: definition of “fully vaccinated adult” is now 3 doses i.e. 2 doses plus booster) AND all contacts who are aged under 18 years and 4 months**

* take 7 daily LFD tests and report results instead of isolating – no requirement for a PCR test to be released from self-isolation.
* children aged under 5 are encouraged, but not required, to take LFD tests
* If you’re a close contact who can end self-isolation, you can help protect others by following our guidance on how to stay safe and help prevent the spread.

**Unvaccinated/Partially Vaccinated Adult Contacts (NB: this includes adults with only 0-2 doses)**

* must take a PCR test and isolate for 10 days.

**Self-isolation for people with symptoms or testing positive**:

Any adult or child who develops symptoms of COVID-19 (high temperature, new continuous cough or a loss or change to sense of smell or taste) must self-isolate immediately in line with NHS Guidance and book a PCR test. They must do so even if they have a positive or negative LFD test.

People living in the same household, for example any siblings, may adopt the appropriate approach to self-isolation and/or daily testing while the person with symptoms is awaiting the outcome of a PCR test result. Eligibility depends on vaccination status or age.

Any **asymptomatic adult or child who tests positive using a Lateral Flow Device** (LFD) must self-isolate immediately for 10 days, subject to the latest NHS guidance on LFD testing on days 6 and 7 (see summary below). There is no longer a requirement to book a PCR test to confirm the result, unless the individual develops symptoms, or the individual, parent/guardian or carer is planning on applying for the Self-Isolation Support Grant, in which case a confirmatory positive PCR is required. People living in the same household, for example any siblings, must also follow the latest NHS guidance on self-isolation and/or daily testing as close contacts.

Any adult or child who tests positive using PCR tests must isolate for 10 days, subject to the latest NHS guidance on LFD testing on days 6 and 7 (see summary below). People living in the same household, for example any siblings, must also follow the latest NHS guidance on self-isolation and daily testing as close contacts.

**In summary**, anyone testing positive on an LFD or PCR test must self-isolate for 10 days regardless of age or vaccination status. However, if the person tests negative on day 6 and day 7 LFD tests (taken at least 24 hours apart, with the first test no earlier than day 6) they may leave isolation if they have no fever after their day 7 test.  Further detail on the approach to self-isolation and testing for those with symptoms, or those who test positive, is available at NHS Inform.

**As always……**If your child is unwell but they are not displaying symptoms of coronavirus, please keep them at home until they are back in good health. Please do not send unwell children to school to see how they cope.  Do keep them at home until you are sure they are fit and well. Please continue to err on the side of caution. **We really appreciate all you are doing here!**

For vomiting and/or diarrhoea, as per normal circumstances, pupils should remain at home for at least 48 hours after symptoms have passed. This now also relates to a fever or high temperature (alongside a negative coronavirus result) and they should not return to school for at least 48 hours after symptoms have passed.

**On a more positive note……** The admissions fortnight for **Early Learning & Child Care applications for session 2022/2023 will be from 17th January until 28th January 2022**. Further information can be found on Aberdeenshire Council’s website in addition to the online application.

Have a lovely weekend!

Take care.

Kindest regards

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Aberdeenshire Council Education and Children’s Services



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