

NR/CH

20 September 2020

Dear Parents and Carers

Just a quick letter this week to inform you of the latest updates at James Calvert Spence College.

Face Coverings

Since the local restrictions for the north east were imposed by government on Friday, we have had to make face coverings or masks mandatory for our students in years 7 and above, in corridors and internal communal areas. This also applies to staff and visitors who come into contact with them in these parts of the school. Face coverings are not to be worn in classrooms.

[The full restrictions imposed can be found on the gov.uk website](#), but the section on education says that "face coverings should be worn by staff, visitors and pupils/students when moving around in corridors and communal areas where social distancing is difficult to maintain. It is not necessary to wear face coverings in the classroom, where protective measures already mean the risks are lower and they may inhibit teaching and learning."

All students in years 7 and above should, therefore, always bring a mask or face covering to school with them, along with an appropriate bag in which to store their mask safely and hygienically. Reusable, washable masks are the preferred choice for a variety of reasons, not least the impact on the environment of disposable masks.

[You can find more details on mask use and care by following the link in this sentence.](#)

As we recognise that parents and carers had very little time to act upon the new policy on Friday, we did give disposable masks and resealable bags to students who came without them on that day. This was a one-off and we are unable to repeat this, so please ensure your child brings their own, alongside their usual school equipment.

The face covering and mask policy does not apply to students who are medically exempt – if this applies to your child, please contact the school to let us know.

Access to the school premises

Please do not come to the school site or enter school buildings without a prior appointment. If you do, please don't be offended when you're asked to leave and receive contact by telephone at a mutually convenient time. Do remember that access to the site is a privilege and not a right – visitors who refuse to comply with the requests of staff when asked to leave can expect to receive a letter banning them from the site.

Additionally, all visitors who *are* invited to our site must wear a mask on entering the school buildings. You will understand that minimising external visitors and maximising social distancing helps keep us all safe.

What to do if you think someone has coronavirus

We are getting calls from understandably concerned parents whose children appear to have the usual cold and flu symptoms, but are worried they may have contracted covid-19. The attached document from the NHS gives some clear indications of what you need to look for if you suspect coronavirus – the three key symptoms of a specific cough, a high temperature and a loss of [or change in] taste or smell. If your child does not have any of these three symptoms, coronavirus is unlikely - they should be treated for a common cold and returned to school once they are well enough to attend.

Coronavirus cases at JCSC

At the time of writing this letter we have had no students with confirmed cases of coronavirus – and hopefully that will remain the case. We have had a few students self-isolating with suspected symptoms themselves, or because a member of their household has symptoms and is awaiting test results.

If we do have a student with a confirmed case, we have to identify the people who have been in close contact with them in recent days. Only those people who fulfil the definition of 'contact' will be required to self-isolate.

What is a 'contact'? [The definition can be found on the gov.uk website](#), but the sections that are most applicable to our school setting are:

"A 'contact' is a person who has been close to someone who has tested positive for COVID-19 anytime from 2 days before the person was symptomatic up to 10 days from onset of symptoms (this is when they are infectious to others). For example, a contact can be:

- a person who has had face-to-face contact (within one metre), with someone who has tested positive for COVID-19, including:
- having a face-to-face conversation within one metre
- contact within one metre for one minute or longer without face-to-face contact
- a person who has been within 2 metres of someone who has tested positive for COVID-19 for more than 15 minutes

- a person who has travelled in a large vehicle near someone who has tested positive for COVID-19”

This is why we are insisting on social distancing [please remind your children of the importance outside of school too], ensuring all classes follow a strict seating plan in lessons and on the school buses, and are maintaining on the segregation of year groups throughout the day – it ensures that we minimise the number of contacts and therefore the effect on the learning of the vast majority of students. Should we have a positive case in our school community we will, of course, follow the guidance and alert the appropriate students and their parents to ensure that any potential outbreak is contained quickly and efficiently.

Our number one priority throughout this pandemic remains the safety of our students, staff and community and it continues to be so. Should government guidance or our local circumstances change, we will act accordingly to keep our community safe, keeping you informed at all times.

If you have any queries or comments, please don't hesitate to get in touch with us.

Best wishes



NEIL RODGERS
Executive Headteacher

Common cold and COVID-19 symptoms?

We know that parents and schools are finding it difficult to work out which symptoms warrant testing for COVID-19. We acknowledge that this is not straightforward, and it is a really challenging time for parents and schools.

It is common for colds and similar viral infections to circulate across communities at this time of year. In many cases, children will be well enough to attend school and continue their learning with little or no interruption to their education. It is important to ensure that children are not unnecessarily kept away from school and exposed to inappropriate testing for COVID-19.

COVID-19 symptoms

If your child (or anyone in the household) has any of the main coronavirus symptoms listed below they need to self-isolate and get a test.

Only children with any of these symptoms need a COVID-19 test. • new continuous cough

Your child needs tested if they have a cough that has lasted for more than an hour, if they have had three or more coughing episodes in 24 hours, or if they are coughing more than usual. The cough is usually dry.

• fever/high temperature

A high temperature is feeling hot to the touch on your chest or back. If a thermometer is available take the temperature – a high temperature is 37.8C or higher. Your child may feel warm, cold or shivery.

• loss of, or change in, sense of smell or taste

This means your child has noticed they cannot smell or taste anything, or things smell or taste different to normal.

Common cold symptoms

Children with simple cold symptoms such as a runny nose or sore throat or a mild cough without a fever who would normally have attended school in other times should go to school and do not be tested for COVID-19.

What to do if...	Action needed	Back to school...
<p>...my child has COVID- 19 (coronavirus) symptoms*</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child shouldn't attend school • Child should get a test • Whole household self-isolates while waiting for test result • Inform school immediately about test results 	<p>...when child's test comes back negative</p>
 <p>...my child tests positive for COVID-19 (coronavirus)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child shouldn't attend school • Child self-isolates for at least 10 days from when symptoms* started (or from day of test if no symptoms) • Inform school immediately about test results • Whole household self-isolates for 14 days from day when symptoms* started (or from day of test if no symptoms) - <i>even if someone tests negative during those 14 days</i> 	<p>...when child feels better, and has been without a fever for at least 48 hours</p> <p>They can return to school after 10 days even if they have a cough or loss of smell / taste. These symptoms can last for several weeks once the infection is gone.</p>
<p>...somebody in my household has COVID-19 (coronavirus) symptoms*</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child shouldn't attend school • Household member with symptoms should get a test • Whole household self-isolates while waiting for test result • Inform school immediately about test results 	<p>...when household member test is negative, and child does not have COVID-19 symptoms*</p>
<p>...somebody in my household has tested positive for COVID-19 (coronavirus)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child shouldn't attend school • Whole household self-isolates for 14 days from day when symptoms* started (or from day of test if no symptoms) - <i>even if someone tests negative during those 14 days</i> 	<p>...when child has completed 14 days of self-isolation, even if they test negative during the 14 days</p>

What to do if...	Action needed	Back to school...
<p>...NHS Test and Trace has identified my child as a 'close contact' of somebody with symptoms* or confirmed COVID-19 (coronavirus)</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child shouldn't attend school • Child self-isolates for 14 days (as advised by NHS Test and Trace) – even if they test negative during those 14 days • Rest of household does not need to self-isolate, unless they are a 'close contact' too 	<p>...when the child has completed 14 days of self-isolation, even if they test negative during those 14 days</p>
 <p>...we / my child has travelled and has to self-isolate as part of a period of quarantine</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do not take unauthorised leave in term time • Consider quarantine requirements and FCO advice when booking travel • Provide information to school as per attendance policy <p>Returning from a destination where quarantine is needed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child shouldn't attend school • Whole household self-isolates for 14 days – even if they test negative during those 14 days 	<p>...when the quarantine period of 14 days has been completed for the child, even if they test negative during those 14 days</p>
<p>...we have received advice from a medical / official source that my child must resume shielding</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child shouldn't attend school • Contact school as advised by attendance officer / pastoral team • Child should shield until you are informed that restrictions are lifted and shielding is paused again 	<p>...when school / other agencies inform you that restrictions have been lifted and your child can return to school again</p>
<p>...I am not sure who should get a test for COVID -19 (coronavirus)</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Only people with symptoms* need to get a test • People without symptoms are not advised to get a test, even if they are a 'close contact' of someone who tests positive 	<p>...when conditions above, as matching your situation, are met</p>