

25th November 2020

Dear parents and carers,

Unfortunately we have seen an increase in the number of students who have tested positive for coronavirus, particularly at the upper school site on Acklington Road. This is, of course, absolutely in line with the national picture where children of secondary school age are one of the most affected groups.

I can assure you that we follow the advice and guidance of what we should do in these situations to the letter, and the [full document that we refer to can be found on the government website](#). We are in regular contact with the health authorities, reporting each case and ensuring we continue to do the right things.

I understand that an increase in cases will cause a little concern within the community, and I am aware that there have been some discussions expressing this on social media. Much of that discussion has been accurate and supportive but, unfortunately, some pieces of information that have been shared are inaccurate and this may have added to the anxiety many people will be feeling.

For clarity:

- When we have a positive case from a member of our school community we are instructed not to send the entire bubble, or indeed the whole class, home to self-isolate. Instead we have to identify 'close contacts', according to the following criteria:
 - direct close contacts - **face to face contact with an infected individual for any length of time, within 1 metre**, including being coughed on, a face to face conversation, or unprotected physical contact (skin-to-skin)
 - proximity contacts - **extended close contact (within 1 to 2 metres for more than 15 minutes)** with an infected individual
 - travelling in a small vehicle, like a car, with an infected person
- We need to apply those criteria for the two whole days before the affected person developed symptoms, and we do this through discussion with them, their teachers and by referring to seating plans.
- We carefully identify only those students who are at risk, because we are not simply 'sending students home from school' – **all students we identify must self-isolate at home, by law, for fourteen full days since their last contact with the affected person.**

Of course, naming a student as a close contact isn't a decision we take lightly because, once identified they **must not leave the house** for the duration of the self-isolation and failure to do so is an offence.

The 'Stay at home' guidance states that, once we identify your child as a close contact and have told them to self-isolate they "have a legal duty to self-isolate. Failure to comply may result in a fine, starting from £1,000. Parents or guardians are legally responsible for ensuring that anyone under 18 self-isolates." We are working closely with our community Police officers to support them, and the rest of our community, in ensuring this is enforced.

If you have not received a phone call and letter indicating that your child has been identified as a close contact, no action is necessary – they have not been at risk and should attend school as normal.

If you suspect your child, or anyone else in your household, may have contracted covid-19 **they must be tested as soon as possible** and isolate for 10 days (or until a negative test result is received). **All other members of their household, including siblings, must self-isolate immediately – you must not send them into school.**

The self-isolation for other household members lasts for 14 days, if the test result is positive.

One of the things that makes James Calvert Spence College so different from many schools, and so wonderful, is its rural location. The fact that our children travel in from so many surrounding areas gives our school its unique character and its lively, vibrant intake. What it also means is that we have teenagers walking and arriving by private, public and shared transport from a wide geographical area each day, from every town and village between Ashington, Alnwick and Morpeth - and sometimes beyond. Of course this also means that, in the current situation, there are a huge number of potential ways in which covid-19 can be brought into our community.

Given that positive coronavirus cases have now been identified in school, the key is to minimise the risk of further transmission. What we need to do in order to get through this difficult patch is to work together to ensure our students follow the school procedures, and adhere to the lockdown rules outside of school. Your support in doing so is essential in this, and I know that can be relied upon – thank you.

Work for all lessons can be found on Google Classroom. For some lessons 'live lessons' are already being delivered via Google Classroom and Google Meet, and I've been fortunate enough to see Mrs Duggan, Mr McNally, Mr Gaines and Mrs Bailey amongst others, using this technology to interact with their full classes – even though many of the students are at home.

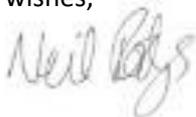
If your child is learning at home, please encourage them to actively engage with all of their lessons each day to ensure they don't fall behind with their studies. More information on how to access our online teaching and learning resources can be found on the Home Learning page on our website but don't hesitate to get in touch if you need further help or assistance.

Many of you will already have received wellbeing calls from your child's tutor, and they are feeding back on some really positive and productive conversations they have had with you. I'd like to thank you for the overwhelming support you've given the tutors and the rest of the staff this week. As you can imagine, it's been a tough few days for us all, and it's so nice to hear that our hard work and dedication to your children is appreciated!

As I've said on numerous occasions, please do keep in touch – we are trying to do all we can to support you, your children and each other through this stressful time.

Most importantly, and now more than ever, stay safe and take care of yourselves and your loved ones.

Best wishes,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads 'Neil Rodgers'.

Neil Rodgers
Executive Headteacher