



19 November 2020

Dear parents and carers,

I am writing to inform you that today we have a further confirmed case COVID-19 in year 9 at Highlands School. I am sure you will join me in wishing the student a speedy recovery.

We have contacted the students who need to isolate and informed their families.

I would like to explain how and why the school takes the decisions it does around asking students to self isolate, as parents and carers have been writing to the school and calling to ask about why we have not asked whole classes and year groups to self isolate.

When we have a confirmed case of COVID-19 at school we ring the Department for Education (DfE) and they advise us on what action to take. On every occasion that we have called them they have advised us to trace the contacts that the infected student or staff member has had and then tell those who have had contact to self isolate. At the moment we have two cases in year 9. We wanted to know whether this would warrant a larger group of students being sent home, such as a half year group, or whole year group. We asked the DfE this question and they said that this was not necessary. We wanted to be sure, though, so we also consulted Public Health England (PHE). This evening they confirmed that we do not need to send any more students home than those who have had contact with infected students. We may still have to ask large groups of students to self isolate in future, but not at the moment. If we do, it will be following the advice of the DfE and PHE.

I know that parents, carers and the wider community will have a range of views on self isolation and the spread of COVID-19 and the decisions we take will not please everybody all of the time. However, I know that the vast majority of the members of our school community, including students, parents and carers, staff and the governing body, would want our decisions on this very important issue to be guided by the advice of health professionals such as PHE.

I ask that parents and carers do not email or call the school to ask for explanations about why we do or do not ask students to self isolate. The answer will always be that we are following the guidance of the DfE and PHE. These calls and emails to the school take time to respond to and stop us doing other important work. Today, for example, we were slowed in the process of identifying which year 9 students should self isolate because the team that should have been doing this work were taking calls from parents and carers asking us to explain our decisions.

The Highlands School community have been enormously supportive throughout this pandemic. Our attendance is higher than schools in Enfield and schools nationally, the vast majority of

students are logging on to Google Classrooms and completing work at home, we are successfully holding our year 10 and 11 mock exams despite COVID-19. I ask that we continue to work together over the coming months to make sure the students at our school get the best educational experience possible in these challenging times.

### **What to do if your child develops symptoms of COVID 19**

If your child develops symptoms of COVID-19, they must not come to school and should remain at home for at least 10 days from the date when their symptoms appeared. Anyone with symptoms will be eligible for testing and this can be arranged via <https://www.nhs.uk/ask-for-a-coronavirus-test> or by calling 119.

All other household members who remain well, must stay at home and not leave the house for 14 days. This includes anyone in your 'Support Bubble'.

### **Further information is available at:**

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-stay-at-home-guidance/stay-at-home-guidance-for-households-with-possible-coronavirus-covid-19-infection>

The 14-day period starts from the day when the first person in the house became ill.

Household members should not go to work, school or public areas and exercise should be taken within the home. If you require help with buying groceries, other shopping or picking up medication, or walking a dog, you should ask friends or family. Alternatively, you can order your shopping online and medication by phone or online.

Household members staying at home for 14 days will greatly reduce the overall amount of infection the household could pass on to others in the community

If you are able, move any vulnerable individuals (such as the elderly and those with underlying health conditions) out of your home, to stay with friends or family for the duration of the home isolation period.

### **Symptoms**

The most common symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19) are recent onset of:

- a new continuous cough
- a high temperature
- a loss of, or change in, your normal sense of taste or smell (anosmia)

For most people, coronavirus (COVID-19) will be a mild illness.

If your child does develop symptoms, you can seek advice from the nhs.uk website at <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/check-if-you-have-coronavirus-symptoms/>.

If you are concerned about your child's symptoms, or they are worsening you can seek advice from NHS 111 at <https://111.nhs.uk/> or by phoning 111.

### **How to stop COVID-19 spreading**

There are things you can do to help reduce the risk of you and anyone you live with getting ill with COVID-19

Do

- wash your hands with soap and water often – do this for at least 20 seconds
- use hand sanitiser gel if soap and water are not available
- wash your hands as soon as you get home
- cover your mouth and nose with a tissue or your sleeve (not hands) when you cough or sneeze
- put used tissues in the bin immediately and wash your hands afterwards

### **Further Information**

Further information is available at <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/>

Yours sincerely,

Vincent McInerney - Headteacher