

17.9.2020

Dear Parents/Carers,

Re: Covid-19 positive tests

The Local Advisory Board is very sorry that pupils in multiple year groups have tested positive for Covid-19 so soon after the term has started. We realise that this is distressing for all the families affected by children now needing to stay off school. We are acting to keep pupils and staff safe in difficult circumstances.

Staff have worked hard to ensure a good start to the year and put in place all the measures needed by the current situation, following Government guidance. We will continue to work to keep an effective learning programme going that allows for the inevitably changing circumstances over the coming school year. All our online learning provisions to cater in this situation are well prepared and will be used to keep children's learning moving forward well while at home. We and staff know the knock-on issues for you as parents and carers are nevertheless unwelcome and challenging. Keeping staff, children and their families safe is central to our planning and we will come through this time well by supporting each other.

The school is following Government guidance about isolating the year groups involved in order to minimise the risk of spread through the families potentially otherwise affected. It is essential we take prompt action and we very much hope this will mean all your children and you yourselves will stay well, and we wish minimal symptoms and rapid recovery for the children and families already infected.

I am discussing with Miss McCoy any additional actions we can take, within the guidance and the resources we can call upon. We will try to find ways we can further safeguard against large numbers of children having to isolate in the future in the event of further positive tests for children who have been in school. We will let you know of any such steps we have been able to identify.

St Hilda's is far from alone in having to act in this way. Groups of children from many schools in Manchester and around the nation are needing to isolate. This pattern is likely to be a challenge nationwide for some time, with Covid-19 cases rising and other viruses beginning to circulate more widely as well. To keep children in school as much as possible, we will all need to do all we can to avoid picking up and spreading this virus. School will do everything it can to enable this in as far as measures are under our control.

The need to isolate is also frustrating for staff, but we are glad technology allows them to continue to invest in our children's education remotely. We hope and pray everyone in the St Hilda's School family will stay well, or at worst be minimally affected. As we support one another well, we will be able to provide high quality education for our children in this challenging time. Sometimes this will have to be through online means rather than, or as well as, in the classroom. Such 'blended learning' (online and classroom combined) may well become more and more the norm in the months ahead, depending on how the situation unfolds. We are committed to using the opportunities this affords to maximum advantage rather than seeing it as only a second best.



On another note, we realise the time we are living through is causing unprecedented challenges for many of our families. We have again enclosed information about the various lines of support available locally that we have shared before. As well as using these contacts, if anyone is facing difficulty and is unsure where to turn, we want to help. Please don't hesitate to contact the school to raise this even if you are unsure what we could do or even what to ask for, or if alternatively you want to offer help, and we will work to put in place support arrangements across the school family to share the burdens together.

Yours faithfully,

Ross

Rev Ross Malkin

Chair of LAB



17.9.2020

Dear parents/carers,

We understand your concerns regarding classes being asked to isolate. This letter is in response to your questions and we hope will help address your concerns.

- **The children should isolate for 14 days, but have been asked to return to school on 25<sup>th</sup> September which is sooner.**

The date of return has been calculated from the date the children who have tested positive were last in school. All children will currently be able to return to school on 25<sup>th</sup> September unless they are unwell or displaying signs of corona symptoms.

It is possible that other children have themselves been infected and that such an infection may be confirmed in coming days. If such an infection has taken place, then one or more year groups may have to isolate for 14 days from the date the child affected was in contact with them. We will confirm any such extension if one is required at the earliest opportunity next week. If your child does have a positive test in the coming days or starts to display symptoms (a continuous cough, fever or loss of taste and/or smell), please inform the school immediately.

- **Why are the lower and upper school off? Have the bubbles mixed?**

There was a positive test in both bubbles of children. The bubbles are scheduled across school, so they do not mix. Bubbles currently consist of:

1. Nursery
2. Reception
3. Years 1 and Year 2
4. Years 3 and 4
5. Years 5 and 6

After school provision also adhere to these bubbles. Staffing numbers and availability of space has meant that bubbles need to be set like this across school. We are currently exploring possibilities to reduce bubble sizes where possible.

- **My child has been to BOSH and might have had contact with children from the bubbles who have been asked to isolate, should I keep them off school?**

No. Bosh has worked hard to keep the children in bubbles consistent with school, and therefore they will not have had contact with children from other bubbles and are fine to come to school.

- **Why can my child's sibling come in if another child has been told to self-isolate?**

Current guidance advises that children in the bubble where a person has tested positive must self-isolate. The members of that household can still leave the house. If anyone becomes unwell with Covid-19 symptoms, then *please* get a test. The household must self-isolate until the results come back.

- **What learning will be taking place for my child whilst they are off school?**

St Hilda's has prepared home learning work in the event that pupils have to isolate at home. These resources will be available via the class blogs and link to learning that would have taken place in school. In the event that the class teacher has to isolate and is well enough to work from home, they will be available via the blog for support. We will arrange well-being phone calls for our children and families. In the event that the teacher is not fit to work/unwell, children will be able to access the resources on the class blog and work independently from home.

- **Can I keep my child off, just as a precaution, if a sibling is in a bubble who has been asked to isolate?**

No. The siblings are fine to attend school, as per the government guidance, as they have not been in direct contact with the child who has tested positive for Covid. They should be sent to school and only be kept off if they or another member of the household starts to show symptoms. If you choose to keep your child at home and they are not unwell and no one else in the household is showing symptoms, then this will be marked as an unauthorised absence.

We are here to support families. Our wellbeing letter will also be shared via email / website and blogs which signposts you to local services. If you feel that you need any support, please contact the school. We will be sending a survey out soon to ascertain who does / not have access to devices and internet at home to ensure we can provide high quality home learning for all pupils. Teachers of those children who are self-isolating are currently well and will be contacting children through the blogs and conducting welfare calls over the coming week. St Hilda's staff understand the challenge of having children at home whilst families are working from home. All feedback regarding learning provision is welcome and we ask that you send any further enquiries to the office and we will endeavour to respond to your concerns.

Carla McCoy  
Principal