

13th September 2021

Dear families

Firstly, I hope you have enjoyed the summer break. We were delighted to welcome everyone back for the new term and the first week has gone well and everyone appears to be very settled.

I am writing to inform you of the changes in government guidance for SEND and specialist settings, updated on 17 August, and the resulting changes at Dysart School. Whilst the new guidance is good news for schools, we must proceed with caution and consider changes gradually in order to support our students fully with adapting to a new school year safely and with minimal disruption. Please take the time to read the information below highlighting key changes.

Testing for staff and students

We are asking school staff to continue to test twice weekly on a Sunday and Wednesday evening. As before, we will not be testing students on site but that we will be happy to provide test kits and offer some support to parents if you would like to test your child at home. We will continue to ask visitors to wear face coverings and to sanitise hands when entering school.

'When to self-isolate' and 'what to do' self-isolation rules have changed

You will not need to self-isolate in certain situations and close contacts will be identified via NHS Test and Trace. Education settings will no longer be expected to undertake contact tracing. As with positive cases in any other setting, NHS Test and Trace will work with the positive case or their parent to identify close contacts. Contacts from a setting will only be traced by NHS Test and Trace where the positive case specifically identifies the individual as being a close contact. This is likely to be a small number of individuals who would be most at risk of contracting COVID-19 due to the nature of the close contact. Dysart may be contacted in exceptional cases to help with identifying close contacts, as currently happens in managing other infectious diseases. You must still self-isolate straight away and get a PCR test (a test that is sent to the lab) on GOV.UK as soon as possible if you have any of these 3 symptoms of COVID-19, even if they are mild:

- a high temperature
- a new, continuous cough
- a loss or change to your sense of smell or taste.

You should also self-isolate straight away if:

- you've tested positive for COVID-19 – this means you have the virus
- if you are over 18 years 6 months and someone you live with has symptoms or tested positive
- you've been told to self-isolate following contact with someone who tested positive – find out what to do if you're told to self-isolate by NHS Test and Trace or the NHS COVID-19 app.

You may need to quarantine if you have arrived in England from abroad. Check the quarantine rules when entering England on GOV.UK.



When you do not need to self-isolate

Any students under the age of 18 years and 6 months no longer need to self-isolate if someone they live with has symptoms of COVID-19, or has tested positive for COVID-19. This means that they will be able to continue to attend school as usual.

Even if you do not have symptoms, you should still:

- get a PCR test on GOV.UK to check if you have COVID-19
- follow advice on how to avoid catching and spreading COVID-19
- consider limiting contact with people who are at higher risk from COVID-19

Reporting Cases to School

We would ask you to still inform school at the earliest possible opportunity if a member of your household has symptoms or has tested positive for Covid-19 in the same way you would for absence reporting, even if your child is not absent from school; this will support school to protect vulnerable students and staff, treat your child with the upmost sensitivity and support our nursing team.

Attendance

School attendance is mandatory for all students of compulsory school age. At Dysart, we will continue to ensure our priority is for as many students as possible to regularly attend school. There may still be occasions where students are required to self-isolate or test positive for Covid-19 and this will continue to be reflected accordingly in our registration.

Nursing Team

Please contact our nursing team if you have any questions or need to update them on your child's medical situation; this will ensure they are aware of any specific vulnerabilities Covid may post to your child's health.

Education, Health and Care Plans including Annual Reviews

Our full range of therapeutic and other interventions will resume in September for all students. Annual review meetings will continue to take place remotely; if your preference is to have a face to face meeting, please contact Liz (lmcintosh@dysartschool.org) at school on receipt of your meeting date.

Government Catch Up and Recovery Funding

We will share progress and plans with you when the new term commences.

Remote Education

We will continue to provide education for all students who need to self-isolate or have tested positive for Covid-19 focussing on how individuals are supported to access their usual curriculum with home learning or through learning on our dedicated platform, Google Classroom.

Home to School Transport

School transport and start and end of day will remain the same. Students can arrive from 8.50am and end of day is at 3pm for school transport and 3.10pm if you are collecting your child from school by car or on foot. The guidance remains that students over 11 years of age, who are able to, should wear a face covering when travelling on dedicated transport to school. The government are no longer recommending maximising distancing and minimising mixing but suggest that unnecessary risks such as overcrowding should be minimised. There may be changes to transport and some bus routes, but you will be notified directly by transport as arrangements for transport are between the local authorities and families.

Protection Measures

The government is no longer recommending that schools must keep students in consistent groups or 'bubbles'. We are mindful of the needs of the students in our setting and have therefore elected to manage changes back to our pre pandemic offer gradually. This includes:

- Greater mixing outdoors during unstructured time
- Assemblies to be reinstated slowly over a period of weeks – however the hall will be out of action for the first 2 to 3 weeks of term due to ongoing heating and water works
- Curriculum trips and visits.

Face Coverings

We will continue to request face coverings for visitors to school when moving through communal areas. This is to protect pupils and staff and to minimise any risk from people they are not regularly in contact with.

Control Measures

We will continue to:

- ensure good hygiene for everyone
- maintain appropriate cleaning regimes
- keep occupied spaces well ventilated
- follow Public Health advice on testing, self-isolation and managing confirmed cases of COVID-19.

More information on Covid, our approaches and updates will be available on our website:

<https://dysartschool.org/key-information/covid-19-information-advice-and-support/>

If you would like to read the full guidance it can be accessed here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-for-full-opening-special-schools-and-other-specialist-settings>

We want to reassure you that we will continue to monitor and risk assess the Covid situation and will update of any changes as and when they occur.

If you have any questions at all, please contact the school.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Leigh Edser".

**Leigh Edser
Principal**