

4 December 2020



Dear Parent/Guardian

### **Covid-19 symptoms**

This time last week I wrote to you to tell you that Public Health England (PHE) and the Department for Education (DfE) were using a wider range of symptoms as potential indicators of Covid-19. This was based on an email that I have from PHE. At the time of writing the letter last week we believed that an announcement about this wider range of symptoms was imminent and that, through acting quickly, we were ahead of the game and doing the right thing to try and prevent whole-school or year-group closure, but, most importantly, to keep everyone safe.

As the week progressed, no such announcement came and we have spoken to the DfE and PHE about this email – they are both now saying, effectively, that it was written in error and that PHE are no longer sharing this information, but they are still investigating whether those additional symptoms are attributable to Covid positive cases.

As a school we are constantly in touch with parents (and, of course, friends) and through this are becoming increasingly aware that it is common for both adults and children to test positive with symptoms from this wider symptoms list, but without displaying symptoms from the established list. In the last 24 hours I have become aware of two adults testing positive with nothing more than a headache and feeling a bit unwell. Therefore, we are still asking you, as parents, not to send your children to school at all if they are unwell. But, our position is changing slightly from what I wrote in my letter to you last week. I can only apologise for this – but please be aware that my letter last week was written in good faith based on information I had received from PHE.

If you, or any member of your household, has any of the following symptoms:

- a temperature
- a persistent cough
- loss of taste/smell

then the person with the symptoms must take a test and the whole household must self-isolate until either a negative test result is received or the 14-day self-isolation period is up, depending on which comes first.

If the test result is positive, the person who has unfortunately contracted Covid-19 must stay at home for 10 days, but the rest of the household must do the full 14 days.

If your child has any of these wider symptoms:

- diarrhoea
- nausea
- vomiting
- extreme tiredness
- headaches
- joint pain
- muscle ache
- runny nose and/or sneezing
- sore throat
- altered consciousness
- seizures

then please do not send them to school until they are fully well again. Officially they do not need to have a test and other household members do not need to self-isolate, but I am prepared, in writing, to offer some

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unofficial advice: if the symptoms are unusual for your child, or somehow it just doesn't feel right, get a test anyway, just to be on the safe side. That is your call – but this advice is based on what we are seeing happening. I genuinely believe that keeping students at home who have these wider symptoms at present will help us significantly lower the risk of having to send home groups of students.

I apologise again for any confusion we have caused. In these unprecedented times it is difficult always to get things right, but I hope you can see from this letter that, where we do make a mistake and realise it, we will then do what we can to put it right.

A number of parents are asking me if we will be closing early before Christmas or if we will sanction their children not coming in and working from home up until Christmas. The answer on both counts, I'm afraid, is no – unless we are told otherwise by the Government or we would struggle to stay open due to lack of staff, as was the case three weeks ago. The Government has made it clear that all children should be in school unless they are ill or self-isolating and we will not authorise or set work for any other type of absence.

I do understand that everyone is scared and trying to protect themselves and their families, and that some of you will be facing difficult decisions, but, as my job is to safeguard education, which I believe is best delivered to students in school, I will do everything I can to protect that – however difficult that might be.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Tracey Savage', written in a cursive style.

Tracey Savage  
Headteacher