

Shepherds Down School

Shepherds Lane, Compton, WINCHESTER. Hants. SO21 2AJ

Tel: 01962 713445 Fax: 01962 713453 Email: admin@shepherdsdown.hants.sch.uk
Headteacher: Mrs Debby Gooderham



26th January 2021

Dear Parents/Carers,

As you might have gathered from the recent texts, over the past few weeks we have had more positive COVID19 cases than we have previously had. Whilst this is concerning for everyone, I want to reassure you that after the initial case no further action was required by the school as all the cases were already isolating at home. The number of cases is also reflective of the level of transmission within the community across the country at the moment, and whilst we can do all we can to minimise transmission within school we are still working within a challenging context. During the same time, we have also had a number of staff isolating due to contacts outside of school which has further impacted on classes and what we can provide. Unfortunately, I think these challenges will remain for a few more weeks, at least, but we are doing everything we can to minimise how this effects children and staff.

There are a couple of lessons to be learnt from the past few weeks. In some of the recent cases the expected symptoms of **raised temperature, persistent cough or loss/change of taste and smell** were not present, particularly at the start of the infection. Therefore, it is important to be extra vigilant of any change with your child e.g. lethargy, loss of appetite or just 'not being them self', particularly if they are isolating due to contact with a positive case. If you have any concerns that your child is exhibiting any symptoms no matter how mild then please keep your child at home and book a test (we have postal tests in school, which can be provided if you are finding it difficult to access a test).

There were also some difficulties with communicating to all parents/carers the need to keep their child at home when this decision was made outside of school hours. This was partly due, to the fact that if you have the App on your phone the text message will go the App rather than register as a new text. This can be resolved by changing the setting on the App to provide an alert to a new message. At the moment, it is even more important than ever that we are able to get a message to parents/carers outside of the school day as we may well receive information that affects your child attending school when school is not open. In future, when we send a text about your child attending school the next day, we will send a text that requires a response to say that it has been received. Thank you in advance for helping us with this, as unfortunately I do not think it will be the last time we might need to send such a communication.

As you might be aware from the news, we are due to start rapid home testing for all staff, which is intended to pick up asymptomatic cases in school staff. We have now received our delivery of these tests for all staff and will have this set up to start on Sunday 31st January. **Staff will test themselves on Sunday evening and Wednesday evening, each week, and if they have a positive result they, their household and all close contacts within the previous 48 hours will need to isolate for 10 days from the date of the test.** Whilst, there will be no need for any school contacts to isolate as a result of the Sunday evening test, a number of positive results could still deplete the staff capacity significantly. A positive test on Wednesday however, will lead to close contacts from the start of the week (e.g. class staff team and those children in the class attending school) to isolate and will most likely lead to the closing of the class for all for the isolation period. I believe that this testing will provide some peace of mind to everyone over the coming months, however it could also increase the number of cases identified and therefore the need for your child to isolate due to being a close contact of a positive case. This could lead to more classes needing to isolate which I appreciate could be worrying and possibly frustrating. Ultimately though, we will be identifying asymptomatic



Hampshire
County Council



cases which will enable a reduction in the transmission across the school and therefore help to keep everyone as safe as possible.

Currently the government guidance remains unchanged from when I last wrote to you however, I anticipate an update from the government about the plans for after half term, at some point. We remain committed to providing a place in school for all children who want it and to do this we will continue to run the part time rota system for the time being. If you are experiencing difficulties with this arrangement, you want to change your decision (even for a short time) or want to discuss this further please do not hesitate to contact me, I am in school every day and always available via email. Once we know what the plans for schools are after half term we will be in touch.

For those children remaining at home we also want to ensure that we are providing as much help as we can. Please make sure you take the opportunity to feedback to the class teacher each week how your child's learning is going at home, what is working, what your child is finding difficult and what else you need. We will also continue to share with all family's ideas and useful via our school website page and we have just started a Facebook Live activity which received very positive feedback. We intend to make this a regular event on Tuesdays – have a look if you are interested.

Whether your child is attending school or remaining at home I know this is a really difficult time for everyone and I am always here to discuss any concerns or issues you may have. Thank you all for your understanding and support during this difficult time.

Keep well

Debby