

13 April 2022

Dear Parent / Carer

RE: Living with COVID Update

I hope you are well and are enjoying the Easter break.

Ahead of our return to school next week I wanted to write to you to outline how the government's 'Living with COVID' plan will impact on us at John Smeaton Academy.

Firstly, it continues to be the case that twice weekly asymptomatic testing is no longer required. This change to previously established routines came into effect in February. School will, therefore, not be able to provide any lateral flow tests to either staff or students. Should you wish to obtain a lateral flow test, you can purchase one from most pharmacies.

Importantly, within the government's 'Living with COVID' plan, it is now not recommended that children and young people are tested for COVID-19 unless directed to by a health professional. This, which is perhaps the most significant change to what we have been used to in recent years, means that we will not ask parents / carers to complete a lateral flow or PCR test if your child becomes unwell.

With the requirement to no longer complete lateral flow or PCR tests, comes a clarification in the government's expectation in respect of those who develop 'respiratory infections'. Respiratory infections are common in children, particularly during the winter months. Symptoms can be caused by several respiratory infections including the common cold, COVID-19 and bronchiolitis. For most children and young people, these illnesses will not be serious, and they will soon recover following rest and plenty of fluids.

Attending school is hugely important for children and young people's health and their future. Children and young people with mild symptoms of a respiratory infection such as a runny nose, sore throat, or slight cough, who are otherwise well, should attend school.

Children and young people who are unwell and have a high temperature should stay at home and avoid contact with other people, where they can. They can come back to school and resume normal activities when they no longer have a high temperature, and they are well enough to attend.

In response to the government's 'Living with COVID' plan, schools have received updated guidance in respect of how to record student absences from school. The use of the code 'X' (absent in circumstances linked to COVID-19) has been removed. Schools must now record absence as either authorised illness (I) or unauthorised absence (O) in all cases where a child is absent owing to reported illness. As a result of the above, absence linked to COVID-19 will no longer be an automatic 'exceptional circumstance' for the 100% Attendance Club. By way of a

reminder, the exceptional circumstances form, along with an explanation of what constitutes an exceptional circumstance can be found on our website or by clicking the link available below.

<https://www.johnsmeatonacademy.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/jsa-exceptional-circumstances-form.pdf>

In summary, the government's expectation in respect of student absence is that all students should attend school unless they are too unwell to do so. Being too unwell is determined by a child either having a high temperature or physically being unable to attend school. It is important that, wherever possible, children are attending school every day so that there is no further disruption to their education.

If you have any questions in respect of the content of this letter, please do not hesitate to contact us via email at enquiries@johnsmeatonacademy.org.uk

Yours faithfully



Ms P Gill
Principal

Useful documentation:

The Government's 'Living with COVID' Plan

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-response-living-with-covid-19/covid-19-response-living-with-covid-19>

Respiratory Infection Guidance

https://www.gov.uk/guidance/people-with-symptoms-of-a-respiratory-infection-including-covid-19?utm_source=01%20April%202022%20C19&utm_medium=Daily%20Email%20C19&utm_campaign=DfE%20C19