



ROWNER INFANT SCHOOL

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Headteacher: Mrs Jo Bedson

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Dear Parents and Carers

As you will be aware, on 21 February 2022 the Prime Minister set out the next phase of the Government's COVID-19 response. Our priority, at Rowner Infant School, has always been and continues to be to keep everyone safe.

I have tried to outline the changes and expected changes for the coming week or so. As you'll imagine, the guidance is not as clear as we would hope, and there are still many questions so thank you in advance for your understanding and support – as always.

Masks

Whilst these are no longer required, parents might still wish to wear them in crowded spaces – such as outside at drop off and pick up time. Staff will no longer be required to wear them in communal spaces unless they choose to do so. This week, visitors and parents will no longer be required to wear masks indoors unless they choose to do so.

Testing

Primary age children have only been recommended to test when there is a positive case in their class or if parents needed/chose to. We have always followed this advice, and while tests are freely available, we will continue to recommend this approach to protect children, staff and wider families linked to our school. For staff, the guidance changed on Monday afternoon, removing the recommendation for staff to routinely test. However, we will continue to recommend staff test at least once a week. Most of our staff are keen to keep this for their own peace of mind.

Isolation

From the 24th February, the law changed and it is no longer a legal obligation to isolate. Instead, everyone should follow the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) advice. As we understand it, the UKHSA advice remains to isolate for five full days if an individual is showing symptoms. They should then have two negative tests before ending isolation after day 5 (testing on day 5 and day 6). There is therefore no expected change in the advice, just to the law enforcing that advice.

For schools, this places COVID on the same level as the current policy in place for when children have other infectious or potentially infectious illnesses – such as Chicken Pox or vomiting/diarrhoea. These require children to be clear of symptoms for a fixed period of time before returning to school (for example, for vomiting/diarrhoea this is 48 hours clear).

At this point, and until the official UKHSA guidance is confirmed, I am unable to say what this policy will be definitively. However, we anticipate the period of time will be similar or the same as was required by law. School policy will be in line with UKHSA advice.

For the time being, we will not change our existing procedure for children with COVID symptoms (high temperature, new continuous cough, change of taste/smell) or those testing positive to remain at home for five full days. If you wish to return them sooner, you will need a symptomatic PCR (not Lateral Flow) to confirm it is not COVID. This is to ensure the continued safety of other pupils, staff and their families.

If your child has no symptoms, but tests positive on a Lateral Flow test, we recommend they remain off school for five full days as well. Although your child may be symptom free, others might not be so lucky and continued attendance while knowingly positive poses a significant risk to others. Several families have household members or children with medical conditions that mean COVID could be life threatening – we do hope families will make the right choice and keep their child off school if they test positive.

As the guidance is made clearer, we will update our policy to match. Thank you for your understanding and patience.

Other illnesses

As before, children do not learn well if they are unwell in themselves. Please avoid spreading illness to others and keep your child at home if they are unwell. This website may be helpful: [Is my child too ill for school? - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](https://www.nhs.uk) As always please ring the school office to check if you are not sure.

What is NOT changing

We will continue to ventilate all spaces used by children and staff in school. Hygiene measures (hand washing and cleaning routines) will also remain in place. We will continue to monitor and report cases as required, and offer advice for families with positive cases.

I appreciate that the current changes may bring more questions than answers. Some families will be pleased to see the changes, while others will be extremely worried about what it means for them. As always, we will take a balanced approach, that aims to enable children to have all the opportunities we can provide, while keeping them as safe as we can.

I am proud of the way our school community, children, staff and parents - but particularly the children – who have navigated the difficulties and challenges of the last two years, and I'm confident that whatever comes next, we will continue to get through it all together.

Thank you for your understanding and support. As ever, if you have any specific concerns, please do get in touch and I will do my best to support you with them.

Mrs J Bedson
Headteacher