

Barnes Farm Junior School

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Dear Parents and carers,

On behalf of the staff and Governors, I wish a Happy New Year to you all! I am writing to inform you of some changes in guidance which came into force after the end of last term and to ask for your continued co-operation and understanding amidst the current backdrop of Covid cases in the wider community.

Covid Case rate

At the end of last term, 8/345 pupils (or 2.3%) were having to self-isolate at our school due to testing positive for Covid-19. The highest we ever went to was 11/345 at any one time. With the changes in isolation rules for close contacts (see details below), I hope this reassures parents who are anxious about understanding the proportion of pupils who test positive within the school. It is imperative that, if your child is well enough, they attend school. We will inform you if we believe your child is considered a close contact.

The Challenge

The challenge for us (like so many other schools and businesses) is the staffing absence rate through needing to self-isolate. We are already pressured from adult cases picked up over the holiday period and there is very little access to supply teachers at the moment. We will do everything we can to keep classes open - this may even involve combining classes. However, we may need to switch individual classes to remote learning (sometimes at short notice) if we cannot provide adequate and safe staffing cover for the class. Please ensure that your child has their Office365 log-in details readily available.

Lateral-Flow Device (LFD) Testing

Unless too distressing for your child, please enable a LFD test to be undertaken prior to returning to school on Wednesday 5th January and then **twice weekly**. Please only inform us via remotesupport@barnesfarm-jun.essex.sch.uk if your child tests positive and you are seeking a PCR test.

Visitors into school

Please avoid coming into the school building unless absolutely necessary. Contact the school office remotely (via 01245 467973) or on admin@barnesfarm-jun.essex.sch.uk for general enquiries or remotesupport@barnesfarm-jun.essex.sch.uk for teacher or learning-related enquiries. Parent Consultations (w/b 17th Jan) are being offered remotely via Microsoft Teams with details being sent out this week.



The self-isolation period for individuals who test positive for COVID-19

Since Wednesday 22 December, the 10 day self-isolation period for people who record a positive PCR test result for COVID-19 has been reduced to 7 days in most circumstances, unless you cannot test for any reason.

Individuals may now take LFD tests on day 6 and day 7 of their self-isolation period. Those who receive two negative test results are no longer required to complete 10 full days of self-isolation. The first test must be taken no earlier than day 6 of the self-isolation period and tests must be taken 24 hours apart. This also applies to children under 5, with LFD testing at parental or guardian discretion. If both these test results are negative, and you do not have a high temperature, you may end your self-isolation after the second negative test result and return to your education setting from day 8.

Daily testing for close contacts of COVID-19

People who are fully vaccinated, or children and young people aged between 5 and 18 years and 6 months, identified as a close contact of someone with COVID-19, should take an LFD test every day for seven days and continue to attend their setting as normal, unless they have a positive test result or develop symptoms at any time.

Regards,

Ross McTaggart
Headteacher

