



Eastlea Covid update 3/1/22



Dear Parents / Carers,

Happy New Year to everyone and I hope you and your family have all remained safe and well over the festive period.

As we prepare for the **full return of pupils on Wednesday 5th January** we are all understandably concerned and anxious about the Omicron variant and the difficulties this could bring when schools reopen. My experience from last year also tells me that nothing can be taken for granted. However, the current message received yesterday from the government is clear that keeping schools open for face-to-face education is an absolute priority.

My biggest concern is that we may find ourselves in a situation where we have too many class-based staff who are unwell and if this happens then retaining face to face learning will be very difficult. However, at the time of writing as far as I am aware we do currently have enough staff who are Covid free and well enough to be in school to teach every class.

So, the good news is that our plan will be for Eastlea to reopen on Wednesday this week for all pupils in all classes and I wanted to underline what we know so far about the protocols we will need to have in place for the early part of the spring term:

1. Wearing masks

- Despite the changes to guidance for secondary aged children, it is not a requirement for children of primary school age to wear a mask. No children will be expected to wear masks in school at Eastlea.
- Staff will continue to wear masks in 'communal areas' of the school – *i.e. at lunchtime when in the dining hall*. Masks may also be worn by adults at the gates at drop off and collection times.
- It is a matter of personal choice whether parents/carers wear masks when outside on the school site at drop off/collection times. If for any reason an adult needs to come into the school building then a mask must be worn.

2. Drop off and collection times at entrance/exit points

- There will be no change to the systems we had in place before Christmas.

3. Arrangements for pupils in school

- Children will continue to be taught in their classes. There will be some mixing between children in 'pairs of year groups' in shared cloakroom areas and in outdoor playground zones.
- For the time being we will not have face to face whole school assemblies or gatherings in the hall.
- Clubs will go ahead as planned with children in separate class-based 'bubbles' when these take place inside.
- Lunchtimes will continue to be staggered with children sitting at designated class-based tables in two 'sittings' to avoid mixing in the hall.
- If any child is required to self-isolate and miss school due to a positive test for Covid themselves or due to a Covid case within their household which requires them to remain home, then remote learning will be provided as long as pupils are well enough to access it. If children are off school for other reasons then remote learning will not be provided as they are clearly not well enough to be in school/doing school work.
- If a situation develops where we are unable to maintain face to face learning at Eastlea due to staff shortages then remote learning will be provided as long as staff are well enough to upload it.

4. Hand washing, cleaning and ventilation

- All the systems we had in place before Christmas will be continued.
- Windows will still be kept open to allow for increased ventilation/air flow in all classrooms. Children may continue to wear an additional layer under their uniform to keep warm in colder weather.

5. Testing, self-isolation arrangements, daily LFDs for close contacts etc

- As you will be aware, since 22nd December, there have been some changes to national protocols and the 10 day self-isolation period for people who record a positive PCR test for Covid has been reduced to 7 days in most circumstances unless you cannot test for any reason.
- This can still be confusing, the guidance seems to change quite regularly and in recent times there have also been issues with access to testing kits which can be very frustrating.
- **Our main aim for Eastlea is to keep pupils, staff, parents/carers and the wider school community safe. We ask for your continued support to monitor symptoms, seek PCR tests when required, complete required daily LFD tests when needed and keep staff informed of any cases in your household/wider family which may impact on other children/adults in school.**

As of 2nd January the latest national guidance is that:

- 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.
- Anyone who is unable to take LFD tests will need to complete the full 10 day period of self-isolation. Further information is available in the [stay at home: guidance for households with possible or confirmed COVID-19 infection](#).
- People who are fully vaccinated, or children aged 5+, identified as a close contact of someone with COVID-19, should take an LFD test every day for seven days and, if negative, continue to attend their setting as normal, unless they have a positive test result or develop symptoms at any time.
- Children under 5 are not being advised to take part in daily testing of close contacts. If a child under 5 is a contact of a confirmed case, they are not required to self-isolate and should not start daily testing. If they live in the same household as someone with COVID-19 they should limit their contact with anyone who is at higher risk of severe illness if infected with COVID-19 and arrange to take a PCR test as soon as possible. *[We would ask that for our Eastlea risk assessment, that anyone awaiting a PCR test result remains off school pending the outcome. As soon as a negative result is received then the child can return to school.]*

As always there is a lot of information to take in and I am sure that over the coming days/weeks there may be amendments to some of the national advice/guidance. We will as always keep you informed as quickly as we can if there are any changes which may impact on the arrangements we have at Eastlea.

Take care and stay safe. We are looking forward to seeing you again on 5th January!

Miss E Beeston, Head Teacher

