



# Eastlea Covid update 4/3/22



Dear Parents / Carers,

Welcome back for the second half of the spring term. I made it clear in the newsletter sent out before the half term holiday what a difficult time Eastlea had faced in terms of Covid in the previous 7 weeks. Several staff had to be absent from school in January/February due to the rapid spread of Covid, and we were grateful for everyone who stepped in to cover in each class when this was required, to ensure that no classes had to close. Many children were also affected – either directly themselves or due to cases within their households. We have to hope that this half term will be an easier one to deal with, but nothing is certain!

The next phase of the national guidance issued last week outlined the government's plan for learning to 'live with Covid' and restated the imperative to reduce disruption to children's education. As always when there are changes to protocols it takes some time to get used to the new systems which we need to follow. At Eastlea we have taken this week to consider the new guidance and make sure that we are comfortable with the new systems.

**These are the protocols we will have in place initially for the second half of the spring term:**

## **1. Wearing masks**

- No children have ever been expected to wear masks in school at Eastlea and this has not changed.
- In addition to this, staff are now no longer required to wear masks in communal areas or when moving around the building. *[This is something that can be reinstated as part of our contingency planning if there is an outbreak or if we are advised to do so by Public Health].*
- Visitors who come into the school building still often wear masks due to their own professional protocols or through personal choice.

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

- There will be no change to the systems we have in place.

## **3. Hand washing, cleaning and ventilation**

- All the systems we currently have in place will continue.
- Regular handwashing/sanitising is now part of the daily school routine and children are well aware of the 'catch it, bin it, kill it' approach to sneezes and coughs.
- Windows and internal doors will still be kept open to allow for increased ventilation/air flow in all classrooms. We do try to balance this with maintaining a comfortable working environment, but children continue to be encouraged to wear an additional layer under their uniform to keep warm in colder weather.

## **3. Arrangements for pupils in school**

- Children will continue to be taught in their classes. There will be mixing between children (usually in key stages) in outdoor playground zones.
- We will return to face to face whole school assemblies or gatherings in the well-ventilated hall.
- Clubs will go ahead as planned, with children now able to be in mixed class groups when these take place inside (in well ventilated rooms) as well as outside.
- Lunchtimes will continue to be staggered with children sitting at designated class-based tables in two 'sittings' to avoid unnecessary mixing in the hall.
- If any child is required to self-isolate and miss school due to a positive test for Covid then remote learning will be provided (via Seesaw/Tapestry) as long as pupils are well enough to access it. As before 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 via Seesaw/Tapestry will be provided as long as staff are well enough to upload it.

#### 4. Lateral flow testing for staff in school

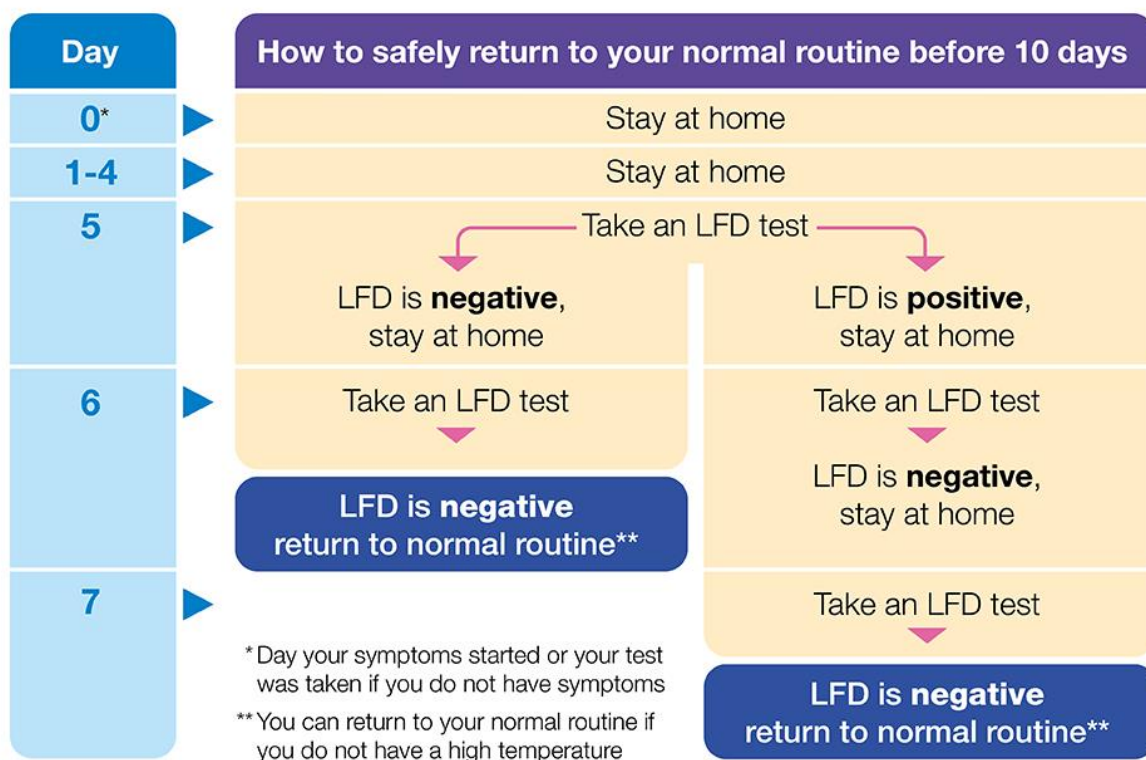
- There is no longer a requirement for staff to complete twice weekly lateral flow testing and schools are no longer able to order/distribute test kits to staff. *[This is also something that can be reinstated as part of our contingency planning if there is an outbreak and we are advised to do so by Public Health].*
- Like everyone else, staff will continue to test if they are worried/feel at all unwell and will seek PCR tests if they have any Covid symptoms *(and we ask that you do the same – see below).*

#### 5. Symptoms, Covid testing and self-isolation arrangements etc

- **Our main aim is to continue to do our best to keep everyone in the Eastlea community safe. We ask for your continued support to monitor symptoms, seek PCR tests when required and keep children off school while awaiting a PCR result or if they have tested positive/remain infectious with Covid.**

*N.B. Until 1<sup>st</sup> April it is still possible to order free Lateral Flow testing kits for use at home and also book free PCR tests. It may be a good idea to order lateral flow tests to keep at home for when they are needed, while they are free, by using the gov.uk website.*

- We would also ask that you continue to keep staff informed of any cases in your household/wider family which may impact on other children/adults in school. There is no longer a legal requirement for people to self-isolate or do daily lateral flow testing if there is a case in their household, but VIGILANCE is the key and if there are signs of Covid symptoms then a PCR test must be sought, and it would still be sensible to check other household members with lateral flow tests, even if they have no symptoms.
- The system for self-isolation remains the same as before in terms of using LFD tests to potentially end isolation early from Day 5 onwards *(and remember Day 0 is the day of a positive test/start of Covid symptoms)* – see below:



We will do our best to keep you informed as quickly as we can if there are any changes which may impact on the arrangements we have at Eastlea or if contingency plans have to be put in place due to an outbreak.

Take care, be vigilant and stay safe.

Miss E Beeston, Head Teacher

