

COVID-19 Frequently Asked Questions (October 2020)

1. What should parents do if someone in our household is displaying symptoms of COVID-19?

If any member of a household is feeling unwell, all members of the household should isolate and the individual displaying symptoms should get a test for COVID-19.

2. What should parents do if someone in our household tests positive for COVID-19?

If a member of your household tests positive, they should isolate for ten days from the onset of symptoms. If they have no symptoms, they should isolate for ten days from the date of the test. If after ten days the individual no longer has a temperature, they can end their isolation period. If a member of the household tests positive, all other members of the household should isolate for fourteen days from the date the person testing positive displayed symptoms.

3. How are you reducing the risk of transmission in school?

In school we have introduced a number of preventative measures:

- Informing parents that if anyone in your household displays symptoms, they should isolate and the individual displaying symptoms should take a test for COVID-19.
- We have introduced an enhanced cleaning schedule in school with an additional cleaner on site throughout the school day.
- We have introduced staggered start times to reduce the number of people on the school site at dropping off and collection times.
- We have introduced hand sanitiser stations across school including at all entry and exit points – we are consistently encouraging regular use of these and hand washing.
- We are ensuring pupils and adults socially distance when possible.
- We have introduced a one way system in school.
- We have reconfigured classrooms to mitigate the risk of transmission.
- We have stopped all large gatherings of pupils and members of staff.
- We have reduced the number of people able to enter the reception area at any given time and encouraged parents to communicate by telephone or email where possible.
- We have limited visitors and volunteers coming into the school building.
- We have encouraged all parents and members of staff to wear masks when on the school playgrounds.
- We have grouped pupils into year group bubbles.

4. What are bubbles?

Pupils have been grouped into year group bubbles. Bubbles are a preventative measure to reduce the contact between different groups of pupils and members of staff. Within year group bubbles, where possible, we are reducing the contact between different classes.

5. If someone in my child's year group bubble tests positive, will everyone be asked to isolate?

This depends on the circumstances relating to the individual who tests positive. If we have a positive case in school, we must identify the pupils and adults who have been in close contact with the individual who has tested positive. These close contacts must then isolate for fourteen days.

As a school we recognise the frustration this may cause parents, carers and pupils, however this course of action is vital to stop the chain of transmission and keep everyone safe. The decision to send pupils home to self-isolate is not one we take lightly and any decision taken is made in conjunction with the Department for Education, the local authority and the contact tracing team.

6. How do you identify close contacts?

As a school, we have followed the guidance given by Public Health England. This is the reason why in some year groups, some pupils have been required to isolate whilst other pupils have been able to continue to attend school. The nature of the cases in school has allowed us to be able to identify pupils who need to isolate whilst ensuring those who do not need to isolate can continue to attend school.

Direct contact:

Face-to-face contact with a confirmed case for any length of time, within 1m, including:

- being coughed on,
- a face to face conversation,
- unprotected physical contact (skin to skin) or
- travel in a small vehicle with a case.

This also includes any exposure within 1 metre for 1 minute or longer.

Proximity contact:

- Extended close contact (between 1 and 2 metres) for more than 15 minutes, with a confirmed case.

7. Why have some children been sent home in my child's class but not others?

There are a number of scenarios which lead to differing numbers of pupils who will need to isolate.

Pupil

If a pupil tests positive, we would only need to send home those pupils who were in close proximity in the 48 hours prior to the pupil displaying symptoms. This would include those sitting close to the pupil who tested positive (we have seating plans to identify these pupils) and those who have been in close contact at unstructured times such as playtimes, lunchtimes, breakfast club and collection times. In year groups where pupils are younger, it is likely that more pupils and often a whole class will be required to isolate.

Teacher

If a teacher tests positive, we would identify pupils who have been in close contact in the 48 hours prior to the teacher displaying symptoms. This would include pupils who sit near to where the teacher stands when teaching the whole class (we have attempted to mitigate this by creating adequate spacing where possible) or those pupils who have worked in close proximity to the teacher during lessons.

Support Staff

If a member of support staff in school tests positive, we would identify pupils who have been in close contact in the 48 hours prior to the individual displaying symptoms. This may involve pupils who have worked 1:1 with a member of support staff or those who have received support during lessons.

In identifying close contacts we are trying to balance not sending home pupils who do not need to isolate whilst identifying those who do to help reduce the risk of further spread of the virus in school.

8. Will there be online learning if my child needs to self-isolate?

Yes. We will be providing remote education for those pupils who are unable to attend school. There will be different platforms depending on the age of your child. For pupils in nursery and reception we will be using a platform called Tapestry, for pupils in years 1-3 we will be using a platform called Seesaw and for pupils in years 4-6 we will be using Google Classroom.

Our intention is to try and mirror the content taught in school. This will include content and lessons that is similar to their learning in school, pupils will be provided with resources that teach and explain concepts.

If you have any questions about remote education, please contact Mrs Fazal – s.fazal@st-margarets.manchester.sch.uk

9. If we have a child in a bubble who is sent home to isolate can their siblings still attend school?

Yes, siblings can continue to attend school unless the child sent home to isolate begins to develop symptoms. If your child develops symptoms the household should isolate and the child should take a test for COVID-19.

10. If my child is sent home to isolate and they take a test for COVID-19 and it is negative can they come back to school?

No. Any pupil who is sent home needs to isolate for the full fourteen day period. Any test result only shows whether a person tests negative or positive for COVID-19 on the day of the test. The incubation period for COVID-19 is up to fourteen days so it is possible that an individual may test negative at the beginning of the isolation period but subsequently develop symptoms and then test positive for the virus during the fourteen day self-isolation.

11. Can I bring my child who is isolating with me when I collect and drop off my other children?

No. Any child who is isolating should stay at home and not attend school even to collect or drop off siblings. If you have no way of bringing your other children to school then everyone would need to stay off school for the isolation period.

12. If a parent tests positive and they are a single parent for example, what happens to their children attending school?

If any member of a household tests positive, the whole household should isolate for fourteen days from the day the individual first displayed symptoms.

13. If children in my child's class are sent home can I keep my child off school?

If we believe your child has been in close contact with an individual who tests positive then you will be contacted to inform you the length of time that they must self-isolate. If your child has not been identified as in close contact then they can continue to attend school. If you are concerned about this, we would encourage you to contact Miss Shaw - h.shaw@st-margarets.manchester.sch.uk

14. Why are you not isolating contacts of contacts?

Pupils self-isolating is a preventative measure and only applies to pupils or members of staff who have been in close contact with a confirmed positive case.

15. Recent research regarding symptoms in children have shown that they can display other symptoms such as vomiting, diarrhoea and a sore throat. Are school going to include these symptoms when deciding to send a child home to self-isolate?

Pupils will only be sent home to isolate if they have been in close contact with a confirmed positive case of COVID-19.

The government guidance is that you should look for these three symptoms of COVID-19:

- A new and continuous cough,
- A high temperature,
- A change or loss of taste or smell.

If pupils are unwell with other symptoms, parents should use their judgement in determining whether they are well enough to attend school. If they are concerned about whether their child has symptoms of COVID-19 they should use the NHS helpline 111.

16. What will happen with my child's attendance for example if we go on holiday and on returning have to quarantine for 14 days?

If you travel abroad and need to quarantine on your return then you should follow the guidance given. This will be recorded as self-isolating on your child's attendance record.

17. Will you be fining parents if their children have poor attendance?

We have no intention of fining parents. If your child is absent due to self-isolating then this will be recorded on your child's attendance record. Education is compulsory for all pupils from September 1st 2020. If you are concerned about any aspect of your child's attendance, please contact Miss Shaw - h.shaw@st-margarets.manchester.sch.uk

18. What about children who have been shielding can they come back into school?

If your child has been shielding or you have a member of your household who has been shielding, we would advise you to contact your medical practitioner for guidance. If you are concerned about your child returning to school or have been advised it is not safe for them to do so, please contact Miss Shaw - h.shaw@st-margarets.manchester.sch.uk

19. If we have been isolating as a family and then my child tests positive should I contact school?

We would request that all families inform school if one of your children test positive for the virus.

20. If my child has been sent home to isolate and tests positive do I need to tell school?

Yes. We would request you tell us as soon as possible as this may require further pupils to self-isolate.

21. Is it safe to send home books with children?

In school we are taking a number of preventative measures with books. Books will only be handled by the member of staff providing pupils with their reading book. When your child returns their book to school it will be placed in a safe space for seventy-two hours before being given to another pupil. If you are concerned about handling books we would recommend that you wipe the book before handling and sanitise your hands after handling the book.

22. Would it help if I volunteered to come into school in case you have lots of staff off?

Currently we have adequate levels of staffing to ensure school can run effectively. As a school we have utilised agency staff when necessary. We appreciate all the kind offers from parents to support school. We cherish our volunteer programme which has seen over seventy people volunteer in recent years. Currently we have paused the volunteer programme to reduce the number of people coming into school and year group bubbles. We will recommence the volunteer programme as soon as it is safe to do so.

23. Why are there no after school clubs? When will they restart?

Reluctantly, we have taken the decision to pause after school clubs. There are a number of reasons for this. Firstly, it is logistically difficult due to clubs traditionally having pupils from different year groups. This would compromise the school bubble system and would increase the number of pupils being required to isolate in the event of a positive case. Secondly, due to members of staff being required to isolate during the autumn term it is difficult to guarantee their will be adequate staffing levels for clubs to run safely. In addition, many staff who traditionally run after school are being required to take on additional responsibilities in school due to absence of other staff and we are prioritising the core business of school running effectively. In the longer term, we are committed to offering after school provision and are looking to improve and enhance provision. We are not currently able to offer a date for when after school clubs will restart. We are exploring options and hope to be able to offer a limited schedule of clubs in the short term.

24. Why are all pupils not receiving a hot meal?

We recognise the importance of all pupils who wish to, receiving a hot meal in school. Due to the logistics of lunchtimes it is not possible for all pupils to receive a hot meal. We are currently operating a rota system of which year groups receive a hot meal and exploring ways we can increase the number of pupils who are able to have a hot meal at lunchtime. Our aim is to provide a hot meal to all pupils who would like one after the October half-term.

If you have a question that is not answered in these frequently asked questions please email h.shaw@st-margarets.manchester.sch.uk