



Building
together
for our future.

Braidside Integrated Primary and Nursery School

**89 Frys Road, Ballymena Co. Antrim BT43 7EN
1989- 2019: 30 Years of Integration**

028 25647899



Principal: J McAuley

www.braidside.co.uk

06/01/22

Dear Parents,

As we begin this new term, I hope you all have had a relaxing Christmas and New Year and have enjoyed time with your families and friends. We look forward to welcoming the children back to school this week.

Following communication from Mark Browne, Education Permanent Secretary, I wish to share some pertinent information with you in relation to the continuing impact of the pandemic and in particular the Omicron variant. At present there have been **no changes to the additional restrictions introduced before Christmas and there is no change to the operation of schools and education settings from the Autumn term.** We will continue to operate with our hygiene measures, staggered starts and class bubbles to ensure the health and safety of everyone in the school community.

However, given the high levels of community transmission and infection rates locally and across Northern Ireland during the holidays, the Omicron variant remains a significant concern as it impacts public services and in particular school. While our key objective is to continue with high quality face-to-face teaching, allowing children to be in school and engaging constructively with learning, we must prepare for a potential increase in cases among staff and pupils. Before Christmas the school experienced significant pressure in relation to staff shortages. Engaging substitute teachers remains very challenging. In terms of non-teaching staff, it is vital that we have adequate staffing levels to enable school to open and operate smoothly. While we were able to maintain in school teaching for all classes before the break, **it is recognised that further shortages of teaching and non-teaching staff, may necessitate a move to remote learning for a period of time.** We will always endeavour to put cover in place and keep the school running normally but if this cannot be achieved procedures for remote learning will be implemented. Parents should note this may happen at short notice but we will keep you informed of this via the text message service. For this reason, it is essential that all pupil contact details are up to date in the school office.

In addition, the guidance for positive cases and close contacts has been amended in Northern Ireland. We ask all parents to support the school community by following this guidance:

PRIMARY CHILDREN WHO ARE CLOSE CONTACTS

A close contact can be:

- anyone who lives in the same household as someone with COVID-19 symptoms or who has tested positive for COVID-19
or
- anyone who has had any of the following types of contact with someone who has tested positive for COVID-19 with a PCR test:
 - face-to-face contact including being coughed on or having a face-to-face conversation within one metre
 - skin-to-skin physical contact for any length of time
 - been within one metre for one minute or longer without face-to-face contact
 - been within two metres of someone for more than 15 minutes (either as a one-off contact, or added up together over one day)
 - travelled in the same vehicle
 - travelled in the same plane

Steps to take if a child is a close contact:

- Take a lateral flow device (LFD) test as soon as possible.
- If this is negative the child can stop isolating but should continue to take daily lateral flow tests until the tenth day after the last date of contact with the positive case.
- The lateral flow should ideally be taken before the child leaves the house for the first time each day.
- If any lateral flow test is positive, the child should isolate immediately and a PCR test should be booked.
- If at any time the child develops symptoms, the child should isolate immediately and a PCR booked even if the lateral flow test is negative.

NURSERY CHILDREN WHO ARE CLOSE CONTACTS

It is no longer necessary for nursery children to take a PCR test – even if they have symptoms like a cough or temperature - unless advised to do so by their doctor. If they develop symptoms, and are identified as a close contact of a positive case, parents are encouraged to carry out a lateral flow test. If this is positive they should then take a PCR test to confirm the positive result. Daily lateral flow tests are not required.

If a nursery child has been identified as a close contact, and has symptoms, there is an increased risk that the child may have COVID-19. If it is not possible to carry out any test because the child will not tolerate the swab, parents and carers should take a cautious approach and avoid contact with vulnerable and older adults, and therefore should not send the child to nursery. They should also stay at home until they do not have a temperature and are well enough to return to school.

CHILDREN WHO TEST POSITIVE

If the PCR result is positive the child should isolate for 10 days from the date the PCR test was taken or the date symptoms started, whichever is sooner.

Ending Isolation Early

Self-isolation may be ended early before the end of the 10 full days provided the child has two negative lateral flow tests (LFT) taken 24 hours apart.

The child can take the first LFT from day six of the isolation period. The second should be taken the following day at least 24 hours later.

If both these test results are negative, and the child does not have a high temperature, the child may end self-isolation after the second negative test result.

The earliest a person can end isolation is on day seven (providing the LFTs on day six and seven are both negative).

If either the day six or seven test are positive the test can be done again the following day. Self-isolation should only end after two consecutive negative LFD tests which should be taken at least 24 hours apart. Testing should stop after two consecutive negative test results.

Self-isolation can be ended as long as the child does not still have a high temperature. If the child still has a high temperature, they need to continue to self-isolate until the temperature has returned to normal for 48 hours.

At the start of next week, a further letter will be issued to parents outlining key dates and events taking place in the next few weeks. As always, parents are encouraged to visit the school website and Facebook page for regular updates. If parents/ guardians have any queries or concerns please do not hesitate to contact the school (25647899 or info@braidsideintegratedps.ballymena.ni.sch.uk) for help or advice.

Thank you for your support and cooperation with everything to date.
We hope you and your families continue to stay safe and well.

Yours faithfully,



Principal