



4 November 2020

Dear Parents/Guardians,

As you are aware the public health approach to dealing with a positive case in a school is set out in the published *Schools Pathway* document which was made available through previous correspondence, is available on our website , and can be accessed at this link:

<https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/a0bff-reopening-our-primary-and-special-schools/#public-health-guidance-for-schools>.

All issues pertaining to public health are on the basis of direction provided by public health authorities.

Since returning to school following the mid-term break, the Department of Education and HSE have enhanced supportive measures in place that will help sustain the safe operation of schools. All clinical guidance will remain under the governance of Public Health.

- Designated school teams working in HSE areas will liaise with schools, and where close contacts are identified by Public Health HSE, school management will notify close contacts and will forward a letter or text from Public Health. HSE will then contact close contacts to notify them of their test appointment.
- Public Health has prioritised testing in place for those close contacts of a confirmed case within the school community. At the point of testing, swabs for the school group will be sent to the laboratory as a 'red flagged' batch to be processed as a priority. This will ensure fast turnaround times and onward further public health actions if required.
- Schools have sought clarity regarding the definition of a close contact in an educational setting. The HPSC, has published the following definition of a close contact in an educational setting:

As per current HPSC close contacts guidelines, a clinical Public Health Risk Assessment (PHRA) will be undertaken for all educational settings where a confirmed case has attended whilst infectious. This PHRA will determine the close contacts.

Close contacts definition:

- Any person who has had face to face contact within less than 1 metre with a confirmed case of COVID-19 for >15 minutes in a school day.
- Any person who has been between 1 and 2 metres from a confirmed case of Covid-19 for >15 minutes in a school day with consideration of other mitigation measures e.g. face-coverings, pods, ventilation, IPC measures or uncertain compliance with mitigation measures in place (assessed through clinical PHRA)
- Contacts are assessed from contact with a confirmed case of Covid-19 during their infectious period - 48 hours before the onset of symptoms if symptomatic, or 24 hours before the test for Covid-19 was taken in those who are asymptomatic.

It is important to note that the response to confirmed cases or outbreaks of Covid-19 in the community or in a school is the responsibility of, and will be led and managed by, Public

Health HSE. All decisions as to appropriate actions following a confirmed case or outbreak will be made by their teams in the context of a full Public Health Risk Assessment procedure.

As a school community we are all working hard to implement the public health advice which is proving to be effective in keeping transmission levels in schools low. It is really important that we all continue to adhere to the recommended public health measures e.g. use of face-coverings, hand hygiene, physical distancing; and to contact the G.P where there are symptoms of concern. Many thanks again for everyone's efforts in this regard.

Kind regards,

Natasha Bassett

Principal