



City of Armagh High School

Principal:

Mr C Douglas, BEng, PGCE, MEd

Vice Principal:

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16th September 2021

Dear Parent/Carer

As you may be aware the guidance on Covid-19 close contacts and contact tracing in schools changed on Friday 10th September.

The Public Health Agency (PHA) Contact Tracing Service (CTS) has now taken over the management of contact tracing in schools. If there is a positive case in school your child **may** be identified as a close contact by the PHA. However, PHA will only be identifying the very closest contacts and accordingly whole classes/groups of pupils will not routinely be asked to isolate or book a test.

The letter from the Chief Medical Officer, Professor Michael McBride, which can be found [here](#) explains the rationale behind this decision.

Please continue to notify school if your child tests positive for COVID-19 as you would for any other illness/absence.

If there is a positive case in your child's class you will receive a PHA "warn and inform" letter reminding you to be vigilant in taking precautions to reduce the spread of COVID-19.

The PHA has developed 'Frequently Asked Questions' to help explain what these changes mean for both schools and parents, I attached these below.

On behalf of everyone at City of Armagh High School I would like to thank you for your continued support in these difficult times.

Yours sincerely

K Mulholland

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What should I do if my child has symptoms of COVID-19?

The symptoms of COVID-19 are:

- a high temperature – this means you feel hot to touch on your chest or back (you do not need to measure your temperature); OR
- a new, continuous cough – this means coughing a lot for more than an hour, or 3 or more coughing episodes in 24 hours (if you usually have a cough, it may be worse than usual); OR
- a loss of or change in sense of smell or taste.

If your child has any of these symptoms it is very important that they do NOT attend school and should also [self-isolate](#) at home. You should arrange for them to [get tested](#) as soon as possible. They should continue to isolate until the result of the test is available.

What do I do if my child tests positive for COVID-19?

If your child tests positive for COVID-19, they should self-isolate for 10 days and not attend school during this time. The Public Health Agency Contact Tracing Service (PHA CTS) will be in touch to determine who your child's close contacts are, and will ask for contact details for them so they can be advised appropriately.

Cases will initially receive a text to inform them of the PCR result – it takes a number of hours for these positive results to be transferred to the CTS. The text will be followed by a telephone call by the CTS, this can happen in the 48 hours after you have received the text to inform you of your positive PCR result. Parents can help by familiarising themselves with the process; if their child tests positive for COVID-19 – expect to be contacted by the CTC, recognise our number (028 9536 8888) by adding it to your phone's contacts, and please answer when we do call.

Parents and guardians will be primarily responsible for informing the school principal of their child's positive result.

What if my child tests negative for COVID-19?

If your child tests negative for COVID-19 they can return to school as normal, provided they feel well enough to do so.

What do I do if my child's friend tests positive?

If you do not hear from the PHA CTS, then there is no requirement for you or your child to self-isolate. The PHA CTS will identify all [close contacts](#), and follow them up directly. If your child has been identified as a close contact, then the PHA CTS will make contact with you or your child and provide advice. However, if your child develops symptoms, then they must self-isolate and not attend school, until they have had a negative test.

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What is a 'close contact'?

Within a school setting, your child would only be identified as a contact if they have had prolonged close contact with the case (someone who tests positive for COVID-19). This could mean a child in the same household or someone who has stayed overnight. It will also include intimate contact for example, kissing and where a child has received help with personal care in a school. It does not include all children in the same class or all those who sit next to each other, because the risk of COVID spreading in the school setting is much lower than in a household.

What will now happen if there is a case of COVID-19 in a school?

Whole classes ('bubbles') will no longer be asked to self-isolate if someone in a school tests positive for COVID-19.

There will be no requirement for you or your child to self-isolate unless your child develops symptoms or you are contacted by the PHA CTS.

All close contacts of the case who need to take specific actions will be identified, contacted and advised by the PHA CTS to follow the latest guidance on self-isolation and testing. Usually the following will not need to isolate:

- adults who are fully vaccinated, where 14 days has passed since the second vaccination, who do not have symptoms and who do not develop symptoms and who have not tested positive; and
- children and young people aged under 18 who do not have symptoms and who do not develop symptoms and who have not tested positive.

Will the close contact definition apply for all school-aged children now even outside of school settings?

No. Outside of school children will use the same [close contact definition](#) as the general population. These definitions are solely for use within the school setting.

What about those who have previously been identified as close contacts who wouldn't now fit the definition?

Those who were previously identified as close contacts should follow the advice they were given at the time. There is no capacity in the system at this time to revisit these close contacts, due to the large number of cases notified each day.

Further questions and answers from the PHA can be found [here](#).

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