



HIGH HESKET C of E SCHOOL (VC)

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Tuesday 8th September 2020

Dear Parents,

UPDATE TO ILLNESS PROCEDURES

Firstly, thank you so much for everyone's support during these initial days of term. I am overwhelmed by everyone's understanding and how well everyone is working within our new systems and routines. I also know that there is a huge amount of information that has to be shared which has resulted in a large volume of letters and emails which will hopefully reduce as term unfolds. Yesterday's letter outlined the procedures we have to put in place within school if a child was to present with at least one symptom of COVID-19 and we have received a large number of queries regarding whether children should attend school or seek testing.

We are approaching the time of year when colds and coughs become frequent and I know many of you will be concerned about whether to send your child in to school or not. After such a long period of closure for some, we are keen to have as many children back in school as possible but we do also have to make sure we are being cautious and supporting the government recommendations. I do also have to stress that we are not medically trained and so it is incredibly difficult for us to determine whether children's symptoms are COVID-19 related. We must follow government guidance and, unfortunately, we are unable to make decisions on behalf of parents as to whether the symptoms are definitely COVID related and school must err on the side of caution in all cases when asked for advice.

Children should not be in school if they are unwell in any way which impacts on their ability to engage with their learning. However, we do understand that children may suffer from colds, hay fever and other common complaints at this time. If these do not present as COVID related and the child is well enough to be in class, they are welcome to attend as they would do normally. However, if there is the presence of either a high temperature, a **new and continuous** cough or a loss of taste or smell, we ask that you keep your child at home and then seek testing in line with government guidance. I would encourage parents to engage with the NHS website as it does provide more details and the information about the type of cough that should warrant concern is particularly helpful. Currently, the NHS website states that the main symptoms of coronavirus are:

- **a high temperature** – this means you feel hot to touch on your chest or back (you do not need to measure your temperature)
- **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)
- **a loss or change to your sense of smell or taste** – this means you've noticed you cannot smell or taste anything, or things smell or taste different to normal

Government guidance for parents is also available at www.gov.uk/backtoschool

If you choose to send your child in to school and they present with, or report to be suffering with, any one of these three symptoms then we will need to direct you to seek testing and ask that you keep us informed of the result. School must be informed of any positive results so as we can respond accordingly. If we are sending your child home because of general unwellness and there are no COVID-19 related symptoms, there is no need to seek a test.

Tests can be booked online or by ringing 119. Unfortunately, some parents have reported difficulty with testing availability in recent days. I believe that the test centres do regularly replenish so it is recommended that parents keep checking the website as availability should increase at regular points throughout the day.

I fully appreciate the frustrations and worries that the current circumstances have for us all and we appreciate your support and understanding. If you do have any further queries or difficulties, please get in touch and we will do our best to help.

Yours sincerely,
Mrs A Harvey