

Parents,

I am sure it was upsetting for you as parents to hear that some children at school had been asked to self-isolate. After us trying hard to avoid this, it is upsetting for school too. I have been fielding a number of questions and thought it best to share responses with all parents.

Why is there some teachers working in more than one bubble?

Teacher planning, preparation and assessment (PPA) time and the contracts of teachers hired to cover PPA time both have to be honoured, as do the contracts of part time staff. Staffing in school is complex. We have hired more mid-day supervisors to reduce mixing of bubbles at lunch but there are some situations where it is impossible to stop staff crossing bubbles.

Why are you using supply teachers?

Although teachers and teaching assistants have been very flexible this year, there are times when it is necessary.

Why are supply teachers not tested before coming into school?

Unfortunately, there doesn't appear to be enough tests available to test those without symptoms. We check temperature on arrival. When a person gets symptoms they get a test. If the test result is positive, we then have to track back contacts two days before the onset of symptoms.

Is PPE being used in school?

Although the guidance to primary schools does not include the use of face coverings, as it is very difficult to teach without being within 2m of young children, when not teaching from the front teachers are encouraged to use masks/visors when mingling with children to give assistance etc. This may have impact on the spread of a virus, however for the purposes of 'track and trace' as it is not a medical setting and the PPE is not medical grade, their use is discounted. So an adult's use of PPE when listening to a child read, not touching the book and sitting side by side could be helpful but doesn't change the fact that if the adult is positive the child would have to self-isolate.

What cleaning is taking place?

In addition to the daily clean we are wiping down surfaces before and after eating and frequently touched areas like door handles are wiped during the day (in addition to the frequent handwashing and sanitising.) In this case, we have had a full day of school and a weekend following the positive case being in school. You may be surprised to learn that schools are receiving no additional funds for cleaning resources or staffing.

Why a whole year group in one case and a partial year group in another case?

Informing a family to self-isolate a child is an imposition so the guidance was followed very carefully. Judgements were around whether there was a face to face conversation, proximity within 1 meter for more than a minute or within 2m for more than 15 minutes. Notification depended on the interactions in the different year groups.

What have we learned?

We have been trying to keep the curriculum offering normal for the children so the supply followed the teaching plans left for them. In future, we will instruct supply that if the plans involve getting within 2m of children, whenever possible to change the plans to an activity that can be conducted at 2m distance. We are also reminding staff to remain more than 2 meters from children not in the classes they teach or at least not within 1 meter for more than a minute.

A number of local schools have had to ask classes to self-isolate. Our case is the first time that it is due to a positive case in supply staff so I have shared our experience them.

Remote learning has been emailed out to families and we have training to introduce Seesaw and Reading Bug after school on Tuesday. We apologise for the inconvenience but have to follow the public health guidance. Let us hope that infection rates fall and this is our first and last case within Great Wood School.

This too will pass.

John Ross