



Rigby Lane, Bromsgrove, Worcestershire B60 2EP  
Tel: 01527 875475 Fax: 01527 870211  
Headteacher: Mrs T Smith  
www.rigbyhallschool.com  
Email – office@rigbyhall.worcs.sch.uk

Sunday 21<sup>st</sup> March 2021

Dear Families,

I hope you are all well. Apologies for more Sunday communication but I feel that it's important to share information and thoughts with you as and when it is relevant and also so that ultimately, it keeps us all safer and as informed as possible.

This last week has been a tough one. We started off with a positive Lateral Flow Test at 7.45am on Monday and sent the quickest messages and made the quickest calls in order to prevent children getting on transport and ensuring they started their self-isolation promptly.

I want to apologise for my abrupt messages when this happens at the start or end of the day, and hope you understand my need to get information out as soon as possible and get people into isolation.

I'd like to thank our staff for carrying out these LFTs, as requested before they come into work on a Monday and Thursday, as this is an important step in being able to identify infectious people and prevent this virus from spreading further in the school. As you know, this case presented as a mild cold and then a sore throat. Due to this, a couple of families decided to test their children as they had had these symptoms and these results came back as positive too. Again, I am thankful to all our families who are testing their children as this gives us an idea of when the virus came in to school and we give isolation dates from this. Whenever I hear of a positive case, I have to track back from the first day of symptoms or a positive result if there were no symptoms, 48 hours to track who would have been a contact and therefore need to isolate. We have kept our bubbles tight in school, we do not share staff amongst them, we do not share resources between them and we do not go between them. The bubbles are as small as we can make them in their key areas, so again there is no need to mix in corridors.

With Red bubble (Chestnut Centre) the cases have been confined to one of the three classrooms with some children and staff positive. All of which I am pleased to report are ok, not severely affected and are getting better. Staff and pupils have been asked to test themselves on Tuesday morning before their return to school on that day (23<sup>rd</sup>). I offered to drop tests off to families in that bubble with children aged Year 7 and over yesterday. A few families took this up. For everyone else, please collect your kits from school on Monday to test your children. Although this is completely voluntary, I would urge that you consider the positive impact of testing your child. One of our pupils took a test yesterday using an LFT to make sure they were ok to return on Tuesday. This child is showing no symptoms and yet came up as positive, on day 8 of

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isolation. I can't thank their parents enough for this as otherwise this child would have come in Tuesday and potentially the bubble would have closed within hours again. I can't force testing, nor would I, however, we have a better chance of being able to remain open if we do everything that is available to us in order to keep us all, as a community, as safe as is possible.

On Friday we learnt of a positive LFT case in Green Bubble (KS3/4 end of school – classes 3.3, 3.4, 4.1 & 4.2), this is now confirmed with a PCR. Again, this bubble is tight but by the very nature of our jobs, our interaction in teaching children with special needs is closer than other settings, and this is despite everybody's best efforts to ensure space at all times. This bubble is now closed until the 30<sup>th</sup> March with a return date of Wednesday 31<sup>st</sup>. Transport have been informed. FSM vouchers will be sent out tomorrow for these days.

If your child has been asked to self-isolate, this only refers to them, with everyone else in the house being able to go about their daily lives as usual. It only becomes a household isolation if you decide to test your child at a centre, with a PCR test as you all have to isolate until this result is returned. If this result is positive then it's also a household isolation. Please can I remind you that if your child is in isolation, they CANNOT leave the house for any reason. Please see the guidance ...



**How to self-isolate**

You must not leave your home if you're self-isolating.

**Don't**

- do not go to work, school or public places – work from home if you can
- do not go on public transport or use taxis
- do not go out to get food and medicine – order it online or by phone, or ask someone to bring it to your home
- do not have visitors in your home, including friends and family – except for people providing essential care
- do not go out to exercise – exercise at home or in your garden, if you have one

The reason for this communication, in my own letter as opposed to the usual proforma I have to send out from public health, is to let you know the situation in school and particularly of our findings with the cases over the past week.

Symptoms that we are asked to look out for by the government are: high temperature (hot to the touch), continuous and persistent cough and loss of taste or smell. For us, this has not been the case with any of our positives, so please look out for what we have noticed over the past week as symptoms before a positive result; sickness and diarrhoea, mild cold, sniffly nose, headache and a general feeling of being unwell. If your child mentions feeling any of these ways, in addition to the standard symptoms, please consider keeping them home, notify us and see how they are for that day, if they don't get any better please take them for a test, always better to know one way or the other. At the moment, things

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we just thought 'were one of those bugs' 13 months ago, are now transpiring as symptoms before a positive result for COVID. So, if your child seems unwell at school, we can no longer 'chance' keeping them in with the evidence building around the symptoms that are presenting as positive cases, so please be aware that decisions will be made for your child to be collected if needed. We will sit them in the isolation room until they are collected so please ensure you do this as promptly as possible.

I understand that you might feel this is a bit overly cautious but with what we have seen over the last week and having been in touch with other Heads, this is going to be the only way to manage this. I thank you in advance for your support and co-operation with this. If it's something you feel you don't agree with, we just need to consider the bigger picture of having to close bubbles for 10 days and this impacting on everyone's childcare and jobs for this time frame. I can't stress enough the need for us all to continue to work together, so thank you for always being so supportive.

I appreciate there is a lot of information within this letter but want you to know how things are and also how this virus is presenting.

I am available at all times on my work mobile 07935 223378 or [covid@rigbyhall.worcs.sch.uk](mailto:covid@rigbyhall.worcs.sch.uk) for anything related to health. Please just ask if you have queries, I would much rather that than you worry about anything.

We look forward to seeing those who can return to the Red bubble (Chestnut 1, 2 & 3) on Tuesday 23<sup>rd</sup>, and look forward to Green bubble (3.3, 3.4, 4.1, & 4.2) returning for the last day on Wednesday 31<sup>st</sup>. Both bubble staff have been, and are still working, providing they are not ill. Bubble leads have been working with their teams to ensure remote learning can continue. If you need devices for this, we will refer to the list previous and ask that you collect from school tomorrow please.

Finally, I thank you all for your continued support and understanding when these bubble closures happen. I have to report these cases to the LORT (Local Outbreak Response Team) and then we are contacted further by the local Public Health team. For each case, we go through our risk assessment to ensure we are getting it right and every time they say how impressed they are with our measures and procedures and how this is being managed. We were also visited by the COVID Advice Team the other morning who were also impressed by our parents who drop off as they all had masks on and kept distance. They couldn't believe we anti-bac every child's hands as they come in and leave, and yet this is part of our everyday routine now. Thank you to all of you who collect and pick up for your support with wearing face masks and encouraging the hand cleaning.

This makes it all the more frustrating when it gets us though as we only ever want our children and staff to be safe and well and shielded from this horrible virus. Thankfully though, cases are mild, staff have been vaccinated and children are being tested where they can. If we continue to work together as well as we have done, we have a chance of stopping this promptly in its tracks when it does appear in the building.

Keep safe and well all of you and please keep me informed of ANY signs of illness that your child may have, or yourselves if you feel unwell.

Tracey

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