



5th September 2021

CASE OF COVID-19 IN BLACKWATER INTEGRATED COLLEGE

We have been notified of a case of COVID-19 associated with our school. We have used the guidance from the Public Health Agency, which is based on NI Executive policy as set out on NI Direct, to do a risk assessment, and you have been identified as a **close contact**. Your last date of contact with the case was Friday 3rd September. This date is counted as Day Zero. **The advice on what to do if a close contact changed on 16th August 2021 so even if you have had letters before from the school about this issue, please take time to read this one.**

Advice to self-isolate and arrange a COVID test

The advice on the next page is different depending on whether you have had a positive PCR test in the previous 90 days and whether you have been **fully vaccinated (i.e. more than 14 days have elapsed since you received your second dose of a UK-approved vaccine)**.

Regardless of your vaccination status and any negative PCR results, **you should avoid visiting hospitals or care homes for 10 days**. You should also minimise contact with people who are at higher risk if they catch COVID-19, such as the Clinically Extremely Vulnerable.

What to do if you develop symptoms of COVID 19 at any point

Stay at home, book a free PCR test and self-isolate until you receive the result. If you have symptoms and live with other people please see [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): self-isolating | nidirect](#) for guidance on whether they too need to self-isolate while you are waiting for your PCR result.

What to do if you are a close contact but have no symptoms

A) If you are fully vaccinated

- (i) If you are fully vaccinated and have no symptoms, you can continue to come into school. If you have not had a positive PCR result in the last 90 days the advice is that you **book a free PCR test** 2 full days after you came into contact with the confirmed case (or as soon as possible if more than 2 days have elapsed) **and book another one on Day 8**. If either test is positive you should self-isolate for 10 days from the date the test was done.
- (ii) **If you have had a positive PCR result in the last 90 days you can come into school and do not need to be retested.** However, if you develop new symptoms please stay at home and arrange a free PCR test as soon as possible.

B) If you are not fully vaccinated (or it is less than 14 days since your 2nd dose) **and have not had a positive PCR in the last 90 days**

The guidance advises that you should **stay at home** and **arrange a free PCR test as soon as possible** even if you do not have any symptoms. **It also says that you should self-isolate at home for 10 days. If this applies to you your self-isolation period is up to and including Monday 13th September 2021.** The remainder of the household can carry on with their normal activities as long as they are well.

The reason for PCR testing of contacts is to find other positive cases as quickly as we can. However this early testing can miss cases who have caught the virus but are not yet infectious – so **even if the PCR test is negative you should still complete the original 10 days isolation.**

C) If you are not fully vaccinated (or it is less than 14 days since your 2nd dose) **and you have had a positive PCR** in the last 90 days

The advice is that you should self-isolate at home for 10 days. Your self-isolation period is as in section B above. The remainder of the household can

carry on with their normal activities as long as they are well. Retesting is not advised in recently infected people who are well, because PCR tests can continue to find non-infectious parts of the virus for several weeks. However, if you develop **new symptoms** please stay at home and arrange a free PCR test as soon as possible.

How to book a test

You can book a test online at www.gov.uk/get-coronavirus-test or by phoning 119. When you are booking the PCR test online, under the section 'why are you asking for a test', please select 'I have been told by contact tracers to get a test.' When asked for a code, please enter **4260309J**. The Public Health Agency have asked that you to enter the code as it helps them monitor and assess COVID clusters when they occur. While you should still be able to book a test even if you do not enter the code, it helps them if you do.

Tests can be arranged at your closest testing site or by requesting a postal kit which will be sent to your home address. You can choose whichever option is more convenient for you. Going for a COVID test is one of the reasons you can leave home during the self-isolation period, however, you should not use public transport. Please order a postal test if you do not have private transport to a test site.

Positive PCR test results in people who are close contacts

If the test is positive a new period of self-isolation will begin for you, for 10 days from the date of the test. You will be contacted by the PHA contact tracing service who will ask about the vaccination status of other adults in the household to decide whether they need to self-isolate, identify other contacts and provide you with advice about what to do next. If you are well at the end of the period of self-isolation, then you can return to usual activities.

For most people, especially children, COVID-19 will be a mild illness.

The most common symptoms of COVID-19 are recent onset of:

- new continuous cough and/or
- high temperature and/or
- a loss of, or change in, normal sense of taste or smell (anosmia)

There are things you can do to help reduce the risk of you and anyone you live with getting ill with COVID-19:

- **please get vaccinated if you are eligible and haven't already done so**
- wash your hands with soap and water often and especially when you get home – do this for at least 20 seconds
- use hand sanitiser gel if soap and water are not available
- cover your mouth and nose with a tissue or your sleeve (not your hands) when you cough or sneeze
- put used tissues in the bin immediately and wash your hands afterwards

Further information

For further information, please see the NI Direct website [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): self-isolating | nidirect](#) the Public Health Agency website <https://www.publichealth.hscni.net/covid-19-coronavirus> or contact NHS 111. If you feel unwell and you are worried about your symptoms or about anyone else in the home, please contact your GP.

I know that organising tests and staying at home waiting for results may be hard for you but it is vital to help reduce the risk of transmission in the community.

If you have any further queries please call Mr Taylor.

Your support is very much appreciated.

Stephen Taylor
Principal