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Re.: Dealing with confirmed case and managing sickness within the school

07/08/20

Dear Parents/Guardians

Please see below some of the main points from the Health Promotion Surveillance Centre advice for schools for what to expect if there are confirmed cases of Covid-19 within the school community, and also the principles that will underpin the management of outbreaks or potential outbreaks and the aligned testing strategy within a school setting.

Please read carefully.

The response to confirmed cases or outbreaks of Covid-19 in the community or in a school is the responsibility of and will be led and managed by Public Health HSE. All decisions as to appropriate actions following a confirmed case or outbreak will be made by their teams in the context of a full Public Health Risk Assessment procedure.

Any actions to be taken by the school will be communicated directly by Public Health HSE. School management will be informed as and when such actions such as exclusion of children or staff; partial or full closure, are deemed necessary on public health grounds. If the school is not so informed, it has not been deemed necessary by Public Health.

It is inevitable that with confirmed cases of Covid-19 circulating within the community, there will be suspect or confirmed cases amongst pupils and staff attending, or working within, educational facilities. However, children will also continue to display symptoms of many other circulating respiratory viruses. It is known that young children often have a persistent cold**.**

Established symptoms in children of the covid-19 virus can include:

- cough
- fever
- shortness of breath
- sore throat
- loss of taste or smell

If your child is sent home from school unwell with any of the above symptoms, it is advised that you consult your doctor.

Below is a further breakdown of what to do in a variety of situations.

Condition	**Action**
Runny nose, not unwell, good form, good energy and normal appetite, no fever, not requiring paracetamol, ibuprofen or any other antipyretic	Can go to school

Runny nose or other minor symptoms and 'off-form', no fever equal to or greater than 38.0^{o}C, no cough, no short of breath, no ill household contacts or history of travel.	Keep home from school for a period of 48 hours to observe emerging condition
Runny nose or other minor symptoms and 'off-form', no fever equal to or greater than 38.0^{o}C, no cough, no shortness of breath, but YES to history of travel or household members with symptoms of COVID-19	Self-isolate pending assessment

The full list of scenarios can be found by clicking here.

If a child develops a fever and symptoms which may be consistent with Covid-19 while at school, the school will contact their parent or guardian and ask them to collect their child as soon as possible. The child will be cared for appropriately by a staff member whilst they are waiting to go home in a designated isolation space. The isolation space will be cleaned and contact surfaces disinfected after each use by a suspected Covid-19 case. The staff member who has cared for the child with symptoms during this time does not need to go home unless subsequently advised to by Public Health HSE. At this stage, no further action by the school is required.

In particular, schools are asked to note that they should not inform other parents or staff members that a pupil or staff member has gone home due to their symptoms. Other pupils or staff do not need to be removed from class, including siblings or other household members.

When the GP of the child or staff member has assessed the symptoms to be consistent with Covid-19 infection, e.g. fever or a new cough, shortness of breath, deterioration of existing respiratory condition or symptoms of aguesia or dysgeusia (essentially loss of or changes to the sense of taste) and the person is referred for a test, at this point the person becomes a suspected Covid 19 case and household members including siblings should be withdrawn from school by their parent or guardian.

If a child is tested and the test comes back as "not detected", the child or staff member should remain at home only until he or she is well enough to return to school (unless specifically requested by HSE to do otherwise). In particular, all diarrhoea symptoms need to have been resolved for 48 hours prior to return to school.

Household members can return to school immediately following the receipt by the parent or guardian or staff member of a "not detected" result. Please inform the school immediately of the outcome of a test. Out of school hours, please message Mr Liddane on Dojo or email info@stpatricksboysns.com. When a case has been confirmed, the Medical Officer of Health and teams will liaise directly with the school and inform them of the confirmed case as necessary and will undertake a Public Health Risk Assessment to inform any further actions and recommendations.

Core to this assessment will be the likelihood of onward transmission from the confirmed case and will be informed by an urgent discussion with the school to establish any appropriate isolation for identified staff or pupils. Every school setting is unique and therefore the risks will be unique too.

The definition of close contacts within a school will be variable and determined by a risk assessment that will take account of individual factors within each school or class. It will not be automatically assumed that a whole class will be deemed as close contacts. Close contacts will be directly notified by the HSE and advised to restrict their movements and present for testing on day zero and day seven. Close contacts will restrict their movements for 14 days even in the event that Covid-19 is not detected in both of their tests.

There is no blanket policy to test entire classes. The testing strategy will be aligned to the Public Health Risk Assessment which may recommend widespread swabbing within a class or school under HSE mass testing procedures.

In the event of an outbreak, Public Health will determine between a range of possible interventions, from exclusion and testing of a small group or pod of pupils up to and including closure of an entire affected school.

While the information contained above is quite detailed, it is important that you familiarise yourself with the processes and in particular the advice around what to do when your child is sick. In short, do not send him to school if he is unwell and keep him at home for at least 48 hours. If he is felling unwell in school, you will be contacted and asked to take him home. In these uncertain times, we will be asking you to err on the side of caution and we will be doing likewise. Again, I would like to thank you for your cooperation thus far and wish you continued good health.

Sincerely,

Anthony Liddane

Principal