4th June 2021

Clarification on reporting absences to school and Government requirement for Covid testing

As you are very much aware the threat of Covid has not disappeared with us moving into the next step out of lockdown. With the influx of visitors to North Devon it is more important than ever that we all continue to be vigilant.

With this in mind, we would like to clarify the action parents/guardians <u>must</u> take if your child exhibits **any** symptoms of Covid. If they have any of the symptoms below, whether or not you think it is just a cold/flu, please could you book a PCR test, stay off school (following the Government guidance below for the whole family) until results have been received then contact orchardvale@ventrus.org.uk or call the school office to confirm the results prior to children returning to school.

The main symptoms of Covid-19 are:

* A high temperature.
* A new, continuous cough – this means coughing a lot, for more than an hour, or 3 or more coughing episodes in 24 hours.
* A loss or change of sense of smell or taste – this means they cannot smell or taste anything or things smell or taste different to normal.

If your child is ill, but <u>does not</u> have any of the Covid-19 symptoms, then by all means keep them at home if they would be unable to cope with a full day of lessons, but please contact the school office by 9.30am providing the reason they are not in school.

The Government are actively encouraging families of school age children to carry out regular Lateral Flow Tests twice a week to try to reduce outbreaks at an earlier stage.

You can pick up free Lateral Flow Tests from any pharmacists or the North Devon Leisure Centre car park facility.

Government's guidance on testing:

Which COVID-19 test do I need to take, and when?

Regular testing for coronavirus is the cornerstone of our transition back to normal life. It's a vital part of keeping the spread of coronavirus under control, especially as about one in three people who catch it don't develop any symptoms so could be spreading it unknowingly.

That's why it's so important you take the right test when you need to, and know the different sorts of tests available and how to access them.

A COVID-19 test usually involves taking a sample from the back of your throat (where your tonsils are) and from the nose, using a long cotton bud. You can do the swab yourself (if you are aged 12 years old or over) or someone can do it for you.

There are two main types of test to check if you have coronavirus now:

* ***polymerase chain reaction (PCR) tests are mainly used for people who have symptoms.*** *It checks for the genetic material of coronavirus in the sample and is sent to a lab for processing. Most people get their results via text or email the next day, but it can take up to three days.*

* ***rapid lateral flow device (LFD) tests are only for people who do not have symptoms.*** *It uses a device similar to a pregnancy test to give a quick result, usually within 30 minutes of taking the test. It detect proteins called 'antigens' produced by the virus and <u>recent research has found</u> them to be very accurate and reliable with extremely low false positive results.*

If you have coronavirus symptoms *(high temperature; new, continuous cough; loss or change to sense of smell or taste) then you should <u>use the government's website to arrange a PCR test</u> that is provided by the NHS test as soon as possible.*

You can order a PCR test kit to be sent to your home or <u>book an appointment at a walk-in or drive-through test site.</u> You and everyone you live with <u>must immediately self-isolate.</u> Do not leave home until you get your test results, except to post a test kit or for a PCR test appointment.

If you do not have symptoms *then you are encouraged to <u>take a simple rapid lateral flow device (LFD) test twice a week</u> to check if you have coronavirus. The tests are free and can be done at one of our walk-in test sites or picked up from community testing sites, pharmacies or sent through the post for you to do yourself at home.*