|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | An Roinn Sláinte Poiblí Campas Ospidéal Pháirc Mheirlinne,Gaillimh H91 N973 T: 091 775200 F: 091 758283 R: public.health@hse.ie Department of Public HealthMerlin Park Hospital Campus, Galway, H91 N973.T: 091 775200 F: 091 758283 E: public.health@hse.ie |

24th December 2021

**Re: COVID-19 cases in your school**

Dear Principal

We are aware of recent cases of COVID -19 within your school. It is likely that these cases are reflective of transmission of the virus within the community.

It is important to stress to parents the following:

1. To ensure that any child who is displaying any COVID symptoms are kept at home from school, that they isolate at home and get tested.
2. Children/staff who have COVID-19 should not return to school until they are 10 days after onset, and five days fever free.
3. Unvaccinated siblings of positive cases, and of those with symptoms awaiting a test result, should be restricting their movements at home, in line with current guidelines.
4. Vaccinated siblings (household contacts) of positive cases should restrict their movements for five days after they have been identified as a close contact. These household contacts will receive antigen tests in the post from the HSE, and should test themselves as directed. They may return to school on Day 6 after they have been identified as a close contact assuming they are well and have not had a positive antigen test (not all antigen tests need to have been completed).
5. Children with symptoms who test not detected should stay at home until 48 hours symptom free.

The continuation of other mitigation measures such as hand hygiene, mask wearing, physical distancing, and good ventilation should continue. Any parent with a concern should contact their GP for advice. **Anyone who is part of the school community who is eligible for COVID and Influenza vaccination should ensure they are fully vaccinated, in line with national guidance.**

From 29 November 2021, if a parent or guardian receives a positive (detected) PCR COVID-19 test result for their child they should contact their child’s school principal immediately to let them know. The principal will then tell this parent/guardian, that they will be contacting the parents of the other children in their child’s pod, to give them details of how they can order free antigen tests for their children using a Freephone number.

If just one pod is involved, only the children in this pod will be offered antigen tests. If there are two pods with separate confirmed cases of COVID-19, then parents or guardians of children in the whole class will be contacted and provided with the information on how they can request antigen tests.

Further information regarding the antigen testing programme is available at the following link

<https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/22c1e-use-of-antigen-testing-in-certain-circumstances-in-children-who-are-asymptomatic-and-part-of-a-classroom-pod-where-there-is-a-confirmed-case-of-covid-19/>

Please ensure that the above information is communicated to parents in the usual manner in which you communicate with them (letter, email, app etc.).

You can make contact with the helpline number should you need any further support and a member of the team will follow up with you.

**Symptoms:**

If your child becomes unwell with any of the following:

Temperature of 380 Celsius or more Shortness of breath

Loss or changed sense of taste or smell Headache

Sore throat Vomiting

New cough Diarrhoea

Runny nose Red eyes

An existing breathing condition that has become worse

**Phone your GP for further advice.**

Thank you for following this advice. These actions help stop the spread of the virus.

Further information on COVID-19 is available at: [www.hse.ie](http://www.hse.ie) and [www.hpsc.ie](http://www.hpsc.ie) or you can phone HSELive at 1850 24 1850.

<https://www.hpsc.ie/a-z/respiratory/coronavirus/novelcoronavirus/guidance/newupdatedguidance/>

[Guidance for COVID-19 Contact Tracing for Children (>3 months to under 13 years of age)](https://www.hpsc.ie/a-z/respiratory/coronavirus/novelcoronavirus/guidance/contacttracingguidance/Contact%20tracing%20under%2013s.pdf)

 

Scan for HSE isolation advice Scan for HSE movement restriction advice

Yours sincerely,



Dr Regina Kiernan, LFOM, MICGP, MRCGP, FFPHMI

Consultant in Public Health Medicine,

MCRN 09830