

Date 16 September 2020

Dear Parent/Carer

Traditionally at this time of year students and staff tend to experience a range of mild illnesses. Over time, these help to build up our immune systems but the start of the year is always a time when we see a rise in such minor illnesses. This is obviously much more complicated this year due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

There are many similarities between Covid-19, seasonal flu and the common cold and we appreciate that making the decision as a parent is increasingly difficult in these uncertain times. As a parent you know your child best and how they are when they are “normally” unwell, so we ask that you use your judgement and knowledge of your own child when making the decision to send them into school.

We are encouraging everyone to attend school as we are increasingly concerned about the lost learning that we experienced earlier in the year, and what may lie ahead for us as a nation, so if you are confident that it is no more than a standard cold, (that you would not normally keep your child off for), then please do send them in.

Both COVID-19 and flu can have varying degrees of signs and symptoms, ranging from no symptoms (asymptomatic) to severe symptoms.

Covid19 symptoms:

Anyone experiencing one or more of the symptoms outlined below should follow the government’s guidance on self-isolation and access a coronavirus test within 3 to 5 days of onset of symptoms either via the NHS online portal or by dialling 119. If the test is negative the child and the family can stop isolating and return to school/ work if they feel well enough. We appreciate the difficulty in securing tests, but it is important to follow this advice as a precaution to minimise the spread of Covid19.

- a high temperature – this means you feel hot to touch on your chest or back
- a new, continuous cough – this means coughing a lot for more than an hour, or 3 or more coughing episodes in 24 hours (if you usually have a cough, it may be worse than usual)
- a loss or change to your sense of smell or taste – this means you’ve noticed you cannot smell or taste anything, or things smell or taste different to normal
- Some people may have unexplained diarrhoea/vomiting, though this is more common in children than adults

Cold symptoms:

You would normally keep your child at home with a heavy cold and should continue to do so. Also, as usual, your child may come to school with mild symptoms of one of the following:

- a blocked or runny nose
- a sore throat
- headache

We continue to ask students to practise safe social distancing and hand hygiene. We also ask that they wear facemasks for the entire journey if they are travelling to school by bus. Your school currently recommends the use of face coverings in corridors and communal spaces in the school buildings.

We thank you for your continued support of the schools and the steps we are taking to strike a balance between safety and education.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Anjan Ghosh', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Dr Anjan Ghosh
Director of Public Health
London Borough of Bexley