

Farmor's School
The Park
Fairford
Gloucestershire GL7 4JQ

Tel: 01285 712302
Fax: 01285 713504
Website: www.farmors.gloucs.sch.uk

Mr M S Evans, BA, MA
Headteacher
Email: admin@farmors.gloucs.sch.uk



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Dear Parents/Carers,

I am writing to provide some reassurance regarding the recent positive test cases and to thank parents and students for their support and understanding during what has been a hectic week.

Firstly, please be aware that I am currently isolating following my daughter being sent home from her school as a close contact of a confirmed case, and subsequently developing symptoms and testing positive herself. In my absence, my deputy **Steve Shaw has stepped up as Acting Head**. I am in daily contact with Mr Shaw and the rest of the senior leadership team, who are doing an excellent job under significant pressure.

In finding myself in this position, I can empathise with many of you who are also 'grounded' for 14 days, and in some cases with very poorly family members. It is deeply frustrating and worrying. However, I know that by isolating my family I am protecting others from catching this awful virus, and stopping its spread is the most important thing.

I will allow Mr Shaw to update you regarding the current situation at school as and when he needs to. I would like to comment more generally on the challenges faced by schools at this time so that you may understand our decision making.

Current conditions for schools

We continue to be operating under what we think of as 'emergency measures' and have been since March. Whilst we had a brief period in September and October where the school felt reasonably normal, the rise in Covid 19 cases locally is now inevitably affecting us. We expect this to continue for the foreseeable future and we can expect further disruption. Further periods of isolation for individuals, groups, and perhaps whole year groups, is likely.

However, we have planned carefully in the expectation that infection rates would rise over the winter. We have invested in our IT infrastructure and trained staff so that isolating year groups can be taught remotely. We have also put in place procedures for contact tracing, which were rapidly put into action last week and over the weekend. It can take a team of staff up to a day to complete a thorough contact tracing procedure for one confirmed case, so there can be a delay when there are numerous cases, which is why we have taken the precaution of sending students home where necessary whilst we identify contacts.



Unfortunately, schools up and down the country are facing similar challenges. In some parts of the country, this level of disruption has been going on since September. It is estimated that two-thirds of secondary schools have had positive cases within the school. The latest figures show that 7% of children in Gloucestershire are currently isolating, and the number is higher for secondary-age students. It is a challenging time, but we will come through it.

What happens when the school is informed of a positive test?

We follow the national guidance for schools and Gloucestershire local authority procedures. When we are notified of a positive test result for a student or member of staff we:

1. Ask all likely close contacts of the individual to stay at home/go home.
2. Gather information to identify any close contacts of the individual during the 48 hours before they became symptomatic and/or tested positive (whichever is earlier).
3. Inform the Department for Education or Public Health England, as required, and act on any advice given.
4. Inform close contacts that they must self-isolate in accordance with Government requirements.

Alongside the actions taken by the school, any close contacts outside of school will also be identified and contacted by the local track and trace team.

I spoke again with Public Health England last night. They have confirmed that our actions and decisions following recent cases have been correct and appropriate.

System of Control

As you know, since we returned from the half term break we have moved to staggered break times to ensure year groups remain apart, and staff and students have started wearing face coverings around the school, in line with government guidance. Following the recent positive cases, we will review our procedures again and make further changes as necessary.

We cannot eliminate the possibility of students or staff contracting the virus, but we can limit the chance that it spreads within the school. As you have seen this week, we are prepared to act decisively to prevent the virus from spreading.

Symptoms of COVID 19

The most common symptoms of coronavirus (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)

What to do if your child develops symptoms of COVID 19

If your child develops symptoms of COVID-19, **you should organise for your child to be tested** via the [NHS online portal](#) or by calling 119. Your household should isolate until you receive the test results giving the all clear.

Please report all absence to the school. **Please report a positive test result immediately** using our dedicated email: covid@farmors.gloucs.sch.uk

When to keep your child at home

You should keep your child at home if:

- They are too unwell to come to school.
- They are symptomatic and awaiting a test result.
- Another member of the household is symptomatic and awaiting a test result.
- They have tested positive (10 days isolation for your child).
- Another member of the household tests positive (14 days isolation for your child).
- They are identified as a close contact of someone who has tested positive (14 days isolation for your child).
- The school moves to remote learning for a year group.

At all other times, your child should attend school.

Please note that other household members do not need to isolate if your child is identified as a close contact of someone who has tested positive.

What can you do to help?

I very much appreciate the supportive emails we have received from parents over recent weeks and months. I have worked in schools for over 25 years and I have not experienced anything that has been so disruptive or physically and emotionally draining. Your understanding and support are greatly appreciated.

Other than that, I urge everyone to follow public health advice by keeping your child at home if they are symptomatic, get them tested, and isolate as necessary. I understand that, as parents, we do not want our children to miss any more school but preventing the spread of this virus must come first.

I would like to recognise the dedication of staff at the school who are covering for absent colleagues, setting work for absent students, delivering remote lessons for year groups at home, and remaining calm and positive in the process. Please bear with us if we are not as prompt in our responses as we would normally be.

Yours sincerely



Matthew Evans

Headteacher