

# **COVID-19 amendment to Ponteland High School Attendance Policy September 2020-21**

## **Introduction**

This amendment has been designed to support the school and parent body as we undertake the implementation of further COVID-19 related changes to the normal operations within school.

## **Rationale**

The coronavirus pandemic, will inevitably lead to increased pupil absence due to illness, the need for self isolation, quarantine requirements when returning from other countries and local lockdowns. We are required to uphold and implement statutory guidance from the Department for Education (DfE) regarding compulsory school-age attendance, whilst recognising the concerns of students and parents regarding health and safety concerns linked to the pandemic.

## **Pupil Absence due to coronavirus symptoms**

If your child has become ill, and is displaying symptoms of coronavirus, you must notify us of the absence and arrange for them to be tested. The main published symptoms are outlined here:

- A high temperature
  - this means you or your child will feel hot to touch on the chest or back
- A new, continuous cough
  - this means coughing for a lot for more than one hour, or 3 or more coughing episodes in 24 hours
- A loss or change to the sense of smell or taste
  - this means your child will have noticed they cannot smell or taste anything, or things smell or taste different to normal.

We require you to notify us of the results of that test so that we can apply our test and trace procedures in line with PHE (Public Health England) and the Local Authority health teams. If the test is negative the student may return to school when they are well enough to do so. An absence of this nature will be classed as a non-compulsory school age absence and will be authorised.

## **School Procedure Following A Positive Test Result**

When we receive confirmation of a positive test result within the student body we implement the following procedure.

- Log the case with NCC public health team and the local Public Health England (PHE) team and then discuss the situation and agree a way forward.
- We identify close contacts (staff and students) who are removed from lessons and advised to self isolate for 14 days; parents are contacted by phone and receive a follow up letter to that effect. Students are collected from school and are given a return date following the period of self-isolation.

- Every parent in the affected year group receives a letter stating that their child was not a close contact and can still attend school.
- At the time of this amendment, our approach is to focus on close contacts rather than isolating full year groups; we believe this is the correct approach for our students to enable as many of them as possible to experience continuity in their studies.

### **Pupils Absence due to coronavirus self-isolation due to a family member infection or a request from NHS Test and Trace**

If a pupil has to self isolate, due to a family member displaying coronavirus symptoms or having tested positive for coronavirus, you must contact us immediately. If a pupil has been instructed to self isolate, we will also need evidence of this instruction. If evidence has been received by the school either from parents or NHS Test and Trace, we will class this as an authorised absence. If no evidence can be provided we will class this as an unauthorised absence.

### **Pupils Absence due to shielding**

As of the 1 August, government advice it that shielding is no longer required. If this guidance is updated, we will revisit the amendment to our policy.

### **Pupils Absence to quarantine arrangements**

If a pupil has to quarantine due to international travel information from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, we will need to look at each case individually. For example, if a child was on holiday in a country and the FO introduced a quarantine while they were on holiday we will assess the families actions to return to the UK. If this was not possible, we may not be able to authorise the absence, however we will make a clear note that this was unavoidable. By contrast, if a pupil knowingly travelled to a country that already had quarantine restrictions in place this will be an unauthorised absence.

### **Pupil Absence due to other illness**

We recognise that a wide variety of other illnesses will present during the coronavirus pandemic, but we request parents adopt a balanced and considered approach when assessing their child's ill health. The NHS has provided a useful web page with information and advice for parents:

<https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/healthy-body/is-my-child-too-ill-for-school/>

If your child feels unwell and you deem them unable to attend then you must contact the school via the usual means with the reason for their absence. Further absence will need to be supported by a note. When possible, please send your child to school and promote the values of good attendance.

### **Future amendments**

The school will continue to be mindful of the ever-changing situation and will promptly implement any changes to the guidance as published by the DfE. We will make additional amendments clear to parents.