



The Wee Friday Note

Friday 10th December 2021



**“Remember this December, that love weighs more than gold.”
Josephine Daskam Bacon**

We are now into the last run-up to Christmas in school. It is more important than ever that should someone in your house test positive for Covid, or your child shows any Covid-symptoms, you do not send them into school. In these circumstances, children must be taken for a proper PCR (Lateral Flow does not count – see poster attached) and they do not attend school until the test's outcome is known and shared with school.

The table below shows the numbers of confirmed positive cases in NI schools last week:

Table 6. Number of pupil and staff cases, by school type, in the previous 28 days to 5 th December 2021				
School Type	Pupils	Staff	Total	Proportion of all cases that are pupils
Primary	5729	717	6446	88.9
Post Primary	6978	582	7560	92.3
Special	158	96	254	62.2
Total	12865	1395	14260	90.2

You will see that there is actually not a huge difference between the numbers of primary school children testing positive compared to secondary school children. However, parents should notice that more primary school teachers are testing positive than secondary school teachers.

I am sharing this information with parents to be totally open and transparent. Some parents may be faced with a choice of keeping their child off school and them missing things like the panto or cinema trips OR 'keeping their heads down' and sending their children who should not be in school, into school. This should not even be thought of as a choice! One child bringing Covid into school could lead to entire families being smitten with Covid and ruining many different families' Christmases. The Covid situation in schools is already very concerning and we all know that the Omicron variant which is much more transmissible is now also in NI. If in any doubt, keep them out. Get them a PCR on Day 2 and wait on the results. Get another PCR on Day 8.

To help protect whole school families and staff and everybody's Christmas, I am asking parents once again to **NOT** send their children into school between Day 2 and Day 8 PCRs. DE guidance says they can, however the numbers of positive cases in schools right now indicates this is a poor and ineffective policy.

The Department of Education's removal of Track & Trace from school in September and poor messaging from the NI Executive has led to the current situation: in which we are heading into the Christmas holiday period in the worst possible shape. The New Year is bound to be even more challenging for schools and families to manage.

All I and Cregagh PS can do, parents, is try our best to keep everyone safe. If this means infected children (or those who are yet unsure if they are positive because they live with someone who has tested positive) have to miss some Christmas treats – that is very unfortunate – but who wants to be responsible for closing an entire class of children, teachers and assistants? That would make for the worst Christmas of all. Thank you for supporting school with this.

1. Health & Safety News

a) COVID

1. Parents should **not** send a child who is considered a close contact into school. (A close contact is someone who lives in the same house as someone who has tested positive and/or someone who is contacted directly by PHA)
2. If a child is a close contact, parents should arrange for a PCR test on day 2 of being off school (and another on day 8 if the day 2 test was negative & the child had returned to school following their day 2 negative result). Some parents may choose whole-household isolation if someone in their home tests positive. This is what used to happen before the summer. Like most other schools, we have found that quite a few children go on to test positive in between Day 2 and Day 8. This is why I have requested parents seriously consider keeping children off between Day 2 and Day 8 PCRs. This DE policy of children returning to school in between tests makes no sense and has proven to be disastrous: improving school attendance but spreading Covid around schools, which ultimately reduces school attendance in the long-term.
3. LFTs are not as reliable as PCRs – usually because it's difficult to get good samples from children and lateral flow tests are not as sensitive as the proper PCR.
4. If a parent **doesn't** keep their close contact child off school or refuses to get their close contact child tested, they must understand that they are increasing the risk of spreading Covid to other children and adults.
5. **BE COVID ALERT: new persistent cough // high temperature 37.7o^c + // loss of smell or taste**
6. ***Please be patient with school!*** We are all fed up and exhausted dealing with Covid and its consequences – just like you parents! School staff are dealing with the same issues as our school families are: regularly taking children for tests, managing children isolating, children missing school, etc.

2. Carols Around the Tree Christmas Celebration – we are planning to have an outdoor Christmas celebration on the evening of **Wednesday 15th December, 7-8pm**. Here is some important information about this event:

- 🎅 Your child will have been given an envelope containing enough tickets for their family (2 adults plus any children attending Cregagh Primary School).
- 🎅 Only those with tickets may attend. Tickets will be checked by school staff at gate. **No ticket, no entry!**
- 🎅 Entrance will be through the school's rear entrance (the new yellow gate).
- 🎅 Children **MUST** be accompanied by someone over the age of 18 years.
- 🎅 This will be a noisy event – **not really suitable for tiny-tots** 😊
- 🎅 **Parents must not allow their children to run around.** Children must stay with their parents in family groups – to help with safe supervision and prevent any children going missing/leaving the school grounds.
- 🎅 Even though we will be outside, people should feel free and comfortable if they wish to wear a mask.
- 🎅 I would ask guests to spread out across both playgrounds.
- 🎅 Please bring a torch or use your mobile phone torch to help read song sheets as we sing along with Downshire Brass Band.
- 🎅 This is an outdoor event – please wrap up warm (especially the children!)
- 🎅 We have a limited number of toilets. Please encourage children to use bathroom before leaving home! The whole event will last 1 hour.
- 🎅 Tea, coffee, hot chocolate and sweet treats will be on sale (proceeds to school funds).

3. **Asthma Inhalers** – if your child has an asthma inhaler prescribed by their Dr, their teacher must be given an inhaler in case it is needed during school. Inhalers should be clearly labelled with the child's name and class and well in-date. New inhalers should be sent in at the beginning of each new term, ideally. If your child has an inhaler, parents need to sign a special form giving teachers permission to oversee the child's use of it. Speak to Miss Murphy (school secretary) about this if you need to.
4. **P4-7 Pantomime at the Waterfront Hall on Thursday 16th December** – more information about this trip will be sent home closer to the time but parents should know that **children will be free to wear masks while travelling on the coach and during the performance**. If this is something you would like your child to do, please talk to them about this as staff will not be able to enforce a parent's wishes. Children will be seated in their class groups as far as possible both on the coaches and in the Waterfront Hall. I just wanted to highlight to parents that the option of their child wearing a mask during this trip is there should they want them to as an extra layer of protection while travelling on a bus. ☺
5. **GENERAL SICKNESS**
Sick children should not be sent to school as they will be miserable and will spread whatever it is they have to other children. If a child has an episode of vomiting and/or diarrhoea, they must stay away from school for 2 full days following the last day the child was sick.

REMEMBER: IF IN DOUBT, KEEP THEM OUT AND OBSERVE FOR 48 HOURS

AS WE GET CLOSER TO CHRISTMAS, LET'S NOT TAKE ANY UNNECESSARY CHANCES!

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Wednesday 15 th December	Carols Around the Tree Christmas Celebration, 7-8pm. Hot drinks & Christmas treats on sale – proceeds to school fund.
Thursday 16 th December	P4-7 Pantomime at the Waterfront Hall
Monday 20 th December	P1-3 visit to Strand Cinema for Christmas movie
Tuesday 21 December	Christmas Magic Show for each class with <i>The Amazing Aldo</i> (possible visit from a special visitor!)
Wednesday 22 nd December	Last day of first <u>full</u> term. Uniform free day. 12noon finish (no dinners or lunches)
Thursday 23 rd December- Wednesday 5 th January 2022	Christmas holidays (10 school days inclusive)
Thursday 6 th January 2022	New spring term begins

Information for parents and carers



Everyone has a role to play in keeping our schools safe and helping to stop the spread of COVID-19. Please don't send your child to school if they have COVID-19 symptoms such as:

- a high temperature
- a new continuous cough
- loss of or change to their sense of taste or smell

If your child does not have symptoms of COVID-19 but has other cold-like symptoms, such as a runny nose, they do not need to be tested and they or members of your household do not need to self-isolate. Your child can attend school if fit to do so.

Contact tracing and self-isolation procedures have recently changed, so here's what to do in particular cases.

Contact tracing will be done by the Contact Tracing Service at the Public Health Agency (PHA). They will call from the number **028 9536 8888** – save the number in your phone so that you recognise it and please answer if they call.

My child has COVID-19 symptoms

- Book your child a PCR test as soon as possible.
- They should isolate until they get their result. If it is negative they can carry on as normal and return to school as long as they are well (no fever for 48 hours).
- If it is positive they should isolate for 10 days. You will receive further information by text message and a contact tracing call from the PHA.
- You should advise your child's school or nursery that they have tested positive.

You can book a PCR test online via www.gov.uk/get-coronavirus-test or by calling **119** if you can't go online.

Someone in our household is positive

- Everyone in the household should book a PCR test as soon as possible and again for the 8th day after their exposure. Anyone who tests positive should isolate for 10 days.
- Adults who are fully vaccinated do not have to isolate while they're waiting for the results. Adults who are not fully vaccinated should isolate for 10 days regardless of their test result.
- Children aged 5-17 who are not vaccinated should isolate until they get their results. If the result is negative they can come out of isolation and return to school.
- Children under the age of 5 are advised to take a PCR test but they do not have to isolate while waiting for results.



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