**16th July 2021**

Dear Parents and Carers

Thank you for working with us over this difficult period of increased COVID cases within our school community. Tracking and tracing during the school day and then again out of hours in the evenings and at weekends has been a heavy weight to carry, but one that we have been happy to do, to keep everyone safe. In reality it has meant that senior staff and pastoral staff have been on call to ‘track and trace 24-7.’ Each positive case has taken on average about 3 hours to track and trace and communicate to parents and carers, followed by more time when we try to respond to questions and individual queries relating to isolations.

I would like to put on record my thanks to senior staff and pastoral staff who have given precious family time out of their weekends and evenings without any additional pay to support this process. I realise that parents and carers have shared our frustration about the implications of isolating their child but hopefully you will have seen that we haven’t taken any of these decisions lightly or flippantly. We are relieved that our duties to track and trace are coming to an end, but we are also keen to share a note of caution that COVID has not gone away and we are committed to work under the national guidelines to try and keep our community as safe as we can. We will be keeping all our COVID prevention measures in place but there is a change to our response to positive cases as outlined below.

As you know, the Prime Minister announced on 12 July that Step 4 of the roadmap would go ahead on 19 July.  One of the key changes that will take place from 19 July is that education and childcare settings will no longer be asked to conduct routine contact tracing. As with positive cases in any other setting, NHS Test and Trace will work with either the positive case – or in the case of children – the parents, carers or guardian of the positive case to identify close contacts.

Please note the following:

**Self-isolating and taking a test** If your child has symptoms, they and other members of the household should self-isolate – and you should inform their education or childcare setting. You should immediately order a PCR test for them. If the PCR result is negative, they and other members of their household can stop self-isolating (unless instructed to self-isolate for other reasons). If the PCR result is positive, they, other members of their household and any close contacts identified by NHS Track and Trace must self-isolate until 10 days after the onset of symptoms.

If your child has a positive result from a lateral flow device (LFD) test, they and other members of the household should self-isolate – and you should inform us on our dedicated emergency email address: **safeguarding@st-josephs.bolton.sch.uk.** You should immediately order a confirmatory PCR test. If the confirmatory test is taken within two days and the result is negative, they and other members of their household can stop self-isolating (unless instructed to self-isolate for other reasons). If the confirmatory PCR test is positive (or is taken more than two days after the LFD), other members of their household and any close contacts identified by NHS Track and Trace must self-isolate until 10 days after the LFD test.

PCR tests can be booked online through the [NHS Test & Trace website](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/testing/) or by calling 119.  PCR test results will be recorded with NHS Test and Trace automatically, but you should also communicate the result to us during term time or summer provision.

**Contact tracing** If your child gets a positive PCR test result, NHS Test and Trace will contact you, using the details you registered when ordering the PCR test. You and/or your child will be asked a series of specific questions designed to identify who your child has been in close contact with. Being in an education or childcare setting with someone who has tested positive for COVID-19 will not necessarily mean a person is identified as a close contact.

You will be asked to provide the contact details, if you know them, of any of the individuals – or their parents or guardians – who have been identified as close contacts. NHS Test and Trace will then get in touch with these close contacts and provide appropriate instructions or advice (see below).

**Self-isolation and/or testing of close contact** At present, anyone identified as a close contact is legally required to self-isolate and must not attend their education or childcare setting (the only exception is if they are participating in a daily contact testing trial). Anyone identified as a  non-household close contact by NHS Track and Trace must self-isolate until 10 days after the date of their most recent contact with that person. If they live in the same household, they must self-isolate until 10 days after the date of that person developing symptoms or, if that person was asymptomatic, the date of their test NHS Test and Trace will notify you of the day on which the self-isolation period ends.

Close contacts are also advised to take a PCR test. If the test result is negative, they must still complete the full self-isolation period, as the test will not detect all positive cases. If the result is positive, they will need to self-isolate for a further 10 days – and NHS Test and Trace will contact them to identify any close contacts.

**From 16 August,** if the close contact is under 18, they will not have to self-isolate (in line with the policy for fully vaccinated adults) but will be asked to take an PCR test immediately, other than for very young children identified as non-household contacts, and they will not need to self-isolate while awaiting the results of the test. If the PCR test is positive, they will be required to self-isolate for 10 days from the date of the test. NHS Test and Trace will then get in touch to identify close contacts. Further guidance on these changes to self-isolation will be provided shortly.

Any cases already identified (or over the weekend before the 19th July) will unfortunately have to continue to self-isolate following instructions in the self-isolation letter. We recognise how difficult the past 18 months have been and the sacrifices that all families, education and childcare settings have had to make. This has been an enormously challenging time for everyone and we would like to take the opportunity to thank you for everything you have done.

Yours Sincerely

**Mr T McCabe (Headteacher)**