



The Loyne Specialist School

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*Working together... Valuing achievement*



25<sup>th</sup> February 2021

Dear Parents and Carers,

As we prepare to welcome all of our pupils back on the 8<sup>th</sup> March I would firstly like to thank you all for the extraordinary support you have offered your child during this third lockdown. It has not been easy for anyone and all the staff have spoken of your resilience, fortitude and consideration that you have afforded your child.

Unfortunately, this letter is lengthy but it aims to capture vital information prior to your child returning. I have placed a copy under the Latest News section of the website to make following the hyperlinks straightforward.

We are all very excited about our pupils returning and I am aware that you will be watching the news and following reports on social media about the on-going pandemic and some of these conflicting reports may be confusing. Needless to say the government have now provided us with a Roadmap out of lockdown and we are so pleased that education has been prioritised.

### **Transport**

In line with the most recent guidance from the government, and to ensure school begins safely and is orderly, we will continue with staggered start and finish times.

It is vital that as our pupils arrive they are welcomed and safely escorted into school ensuring that they follow a hygiene routine prior to entering the building and joining their class bubble. It would be impossible to provide a COVID secure environment if all of our pupils arrived and departed at the same time. Please rest assured we have the best interest of your child, your family and that of our staff at the centre of our decision making and I know this is what you would want despite the challenges that these decisions are continuing to cause.

LCC transport have their own rigorous testing arrangements for their drivers and escorts.. As you would expect if a driver or escort tests positive they are not allowed to continue their duties. Transport have asked us to share that transport for your child may be cancelled at the last minute and you must, at this point make your own arrangements to get your child to and from school. Unfortunately as a school there is very little we can do to support you in this eventuality but we will of course be sympathetic on the day.

If you would like to transport your own child to and from school you may arrive at 9.00 a.m. with dismissal at 3.00 p.m. If you choose to bring your child to school yourself it is important that you park your car safely away from the school as the residential roads are narrow and the school transport buses require space to manoeuvre. **On arrival please wait at the school**



**pedestrian entrance and keep 2 meters apart as noted in the signage.** Staff will be ready to collect your child at 9.00 a.m. but no sooner as they have COVID security measures to complete before pupils arrive.

It is important that we know if you are transporting your own child so we can be there to collect them this must be shared with your child's class teacher in your regular communication next week.

In order to support staff and keep our school environment as COVID Secure as possible please refrain from sending any items into school other than those which are **essential**. If you send in pads for your child these must be in an unopened pack. Can I also request that your child is provided with a backpack if they need to bring in any items including a packed lunch? This allows them to leave transport hands free so they can use the hand sanitiser before entering school. This is a teachable moment and staff need their hands free too, to support your child.

### **Masks**

Masks are now widely available and are becoming a common sight on children across the land. As you will know, for those with learning disabilities, the wearing of a face covering on transport is not mandatory. However, I would encourage you to continue to promote them. Our website houses a helpful video which we hope will help normalise the wearing of masks at certain times, in school <https://www.loyneschool.org.uk/schoolclosure-wholeschool/> (See Support for you and your Family - Support for your children). If you require any further support with this please speak to your child's teacher.

If your child is comfortable in wearing a mask and you are planning for them to wear one on transport please note the following:

- The mask worn to school will be removed on entry and placed in a plastic bag.
- A second mask will need to be provided for the homeward journey.

**It would be helpful if you could provide a small container /sealable plastic bag with the spare mask and a further plastic bag inside. This will help staff at the start and end of the day.**

You may be aware from the most recent updates that the government are now advising that secondary age pupils and above should wear a mask at all times, including in the classroom. Whilst, as stated above, our pupils are exempt, if you are the parent of an older child and you want your child to remain in a mask all day please do let us know so this can be discussed.

### **Lateral Flow Testing (LFT)**

Lateral Flow Tests (LFT) are similar to tests provided at a drop in centre (nasal and throat swabs) but they only take 30 minutes to provide a result. In this way anyone with asymptomatic (the person does not feel ill) symptoms can be told to self-isolate.

As you will be aware the government have placed great emphasis on the availability of LFT's in school. As I shared with you earlier in the year we do not feel that testing our pupils is in their best interest. Many will be scared of the invasive procedure, others may go into crisis and they all will struggle to understand the purpose of the test. At this moment in time we will continue to provide all staff with LFT but we will not test pupils.

## **Uniform**

All pupils will be expected to wear full uniform from the 8<sup>th</sup> March. Please ensure that you make every effort to keep your child's uniform freshly laundered although it is no longer necessary to have a clean uniform every day. The uniform rules will revert to our previous high expectations so please begin to prepare for this. Expectations can be found here <https://www.loyneschool.org.uk/uniform/>

## **Attendance**

Since November I have taken a pragmatic and hopefully fair approach to attendance. However it is very clear that the government now wish to see all children back in school full time from the 8<sup>th</sup> March, attendance will become mandatory again. Guidance states:

*'The usual rules on school attendance apply to all pupils including:*

- *parents' duty to secure their child's regular attendance at school (where the child is a registered pupil at school, and they are of compulsory school age)*
- *the ability to issue sanctions, including fixed penalty notices in line with local authorities' codes of conduct'*

I understand that for some of you this will be a challenge as you may have your own concerns about the risk to a family members health. Current medical advice is that even if a member of the family is Clinically Extremely Vulnerable (CEV) your child can still attend school. I would urge you to work with staff to ensure your child begins to access school and work towards full time attendance after Easter. At all times we will support your effort and keep communication open. If you are aiming for full attendance then I will not use any legislative powers until after the Easter holiday.

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/963557/Additional\\_operational\\_guidance\\_for\\_special\\_schools\\_special\\_post-16\\_institutions\\_and\\_alternative\\_provision.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/963557/Additional_operational_guidance_for_special_schools_special_post-16_institutions_and_alternative_provision.pdf)

## **Visits to school**

Our school is operating a Social Bubble model which means all pupils and staff, to the best of our ability, are kept in a small bubble with no contact with the wider school. This is to ensure that if any one person or child shows signs of the virus we are able to clearly identify those who they have come into contact with. The less interpersonal contacts a child and adult can have the safer they will be. It is for this reason that we will not be accepting any visitors to school for the foreseeable future other than those deemed as essential, e.g. therapists supporting our pupils, contractors for repair.

If you wish to speak to a member of staff, over and above a usual phone call, we will utilise Zoom. If your child is ill whilst in school (for any reason) you will be contacted in the usual manner and you must arrange to pick them up immediately.

## **COVID symptoms**

Please note the following:

The main symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19) are:

- a high temperature – this means you feel hot to touch on your chest or back (you do not need to measure your temperature)
- 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 – this may be difficult to ascertain from your child

Please **DO NOT** send your child to school if they exhibit any of the symptoms above. If you have needed to administer **paracetamol or any pain killer** then you must let school know we will discuss if it is safe to send your child in.

If you, a member of your family or your child have any of the main symptoms of coronavirus or you feel unwell with other symptoms such as a persistent headache or diarrhoea, you must immediately;

- book test <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-getting-tested>
- Stay at home and do not have visitors until you get your test result – only leave your home to have a test <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/self-isolation-and-treatment/>

Anyone you live with, and anyone in your support / childcare bubble, must also stay at home until you get your result.

If your child displays symptoms in school they will be isolated with a member of staff in full PPE. We will call you and you must come to pick your child up as soon as possible. From this point you will need to follow the steps above.

It is critical that you **immediately** inform us of the outcome of a COVID test (whether positive or negative) for your child or anyone in your household or bubble. If a positive result for a pupil is received we will need to rapidly identify and isolate all close contacts at school.

Please note, in some circumstances we may need to suspend a social bubble for a short period of time. If this is the case we will, as per government guidance, provide blended learning.

Our website has a vast array of information to support you and your child at this time and very soon our updated Risk Assessment will be available on the home page.

<https://www.loyneschool.org.uk/>

Finally, after a long and difficult winter I do hope you share our optimism for the spring. All our lives have been affected in one way or another and we have all adapted to what has become the new normal. As we prepare to welcome your child back to school we do so knowing that we can begin to bring normality to their days and engage them further in the wonderful world

of learning. Our new curriculum will support your child in developing their skills and ensure that their mental health and wellbeing are kept central, in order that they are minimally affected by the on-going global situation.

Your child's class teacher will be in contact with you to discuss the return. I would urge you to be as open and honest as you have been and share any concerns you may have or any changes that have occurred that directly or indirectly affect them. Remember, your child has coped with many changes this year and I am sure they will continue to surprise us with their resilience and adaptability. As the roadmap out of lockdown develops I will remain in contact and share how we are adapting and expanding the work that we do with your child.

I would like to thank you all, once again, for your continued support and cooperation at this challenging time.

Kind regards

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Susan Campbell". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Susan Campbell  
Headteacher