

Letter sent to parents and carers at St Andrew's Academy by Renfrewshire Council's Director of Children's Services Steven Quinn, 7 October 2020.

Dear parent/carer,

As a parent or carer of a pupil at St Andrew's Academy, you will of course already be aware of the NHS Test and Protect activity taking place in the school.

First of all, to all those who have tested positive for covid-19, I wish you a full and healthy recovery. Please let the school know if there is anything that we can do to support your recovery.

I appreciate the numbers of staff and pupils now being required to self-isolate will have caused understandable concern and I wanted to write to you all to offer reassurance over that.

The advice of the health authorities is that the school remains safe to be open and I wanted to update you on the work we and our NHS colleagues are doing to make sure that stays the case.

Current cases and self-isolation

I can start by offering clarity on the numbers involved. From the point Test and Protect activity started in St Andrew's Academy on Thursday 24 September to today, a total of 22 cases of Covid19 have been detected among people connected to the school out of almost 1,600 staff and pupils.

Please note this is the total for that period and not the number of current cases. Individuals will return to school once their self-isolation has ended and they are fit to do so.

The NHS have advised some of these cases are likely to have occurred due to transmission within the school, however it is important to stress others will be down to community transmission - that the virus was contracted outwith school and not necessarily passed it on within it.

We are advised we may still see some new cases as a result of this cluster as it can take up to 14 days for symptoms to develop. These numbers reflect the fact there is a currently a rising number of cases across Renfrewshire and the NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde health board area in general.

It is worth briefly reminding everyone of what happens when we become aware of a positive case. We, the school and the NHS work together to identify everyone who has been a close contact of that person during the period they may have been infectious, and they are contacted and asked to self-isolate for 14 days.

There is a detailed process and risk assessment to establish close contacts. It does not necessarily mean an entire class will be asked to self-isolate if a positive case is identified. Only those identified as at risk are contacted and everyone else is safe to attend as normal. The requirement to maintain patient confidentiality limits how much we can tell parents in these situations.

Safety measures

The health, safety and wellbeing of your children and our staff is the number one priority for me and my team. Across Renfrewshire we prepared thoroughly for our pupils returning to school in August.

We have closely followed all national guidance, based on expert scientific advice, to ensure we do everything possible to keep them safe and provide the best learning environment possible.

That includes an enhanced cleaning regime across all buildings, cleaning of surfaces during the day, promoting good hand hygiene, advising physical distancing where possible, careful management of pick-ups and drop-offs, and, more recently, the use of face coverings among over-12s.

In the 13 days since the first positive case was discovered at St Andrew's Academy, head teacher Kevin Henry and his staff have worked closely with the council's education managers and environmental health team, and public health experts from NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde.

We have at all times followed the public health advice and as a result extra measures have been brought in as a precaution, with additional enhanced cleaning and an additional deep clean of the building, which took place last night.

The advice from the NHS is they are completely satisfied the school has robust measures in place to stop the spread of the virus.

If any parents at the school have a specific health concern relating to them or their child, we would urge you to speak to your GP or a healthcare professional. There may be things the school can do to support and offer extra reassurance, but we can only do this on the basis of medical advice.

I would also reiterate the general advice around Covid19 symptoms as we all have a role to play to help stop the spread. If your child or someone you live with displays any of the three main symptoms (new continuous cough, high temperature, loss of taste or smell) please do not send them to school - you should all stay at home and book a test for all who have symptoms.

Support for home learning

We know many of you will have questions over the impact of self-isolation on your child's education and the school are keen to keep anything they miss by being at home to a minimum, and measures are in place to support home learning.

The school will continue to issue homework and materials from classroom teachers, this will be available on Microsoft Teams - <http://www.standrewspaisley.com/microsoft-teams.html>

The school website offers guidance to parents/carers and students on how to access this work. The website also has the details of all the Team codes that students need to access their work. There is a contact page if any support is required. All of the class Teams are available for all students, not just those who are requiring to self-isolate.

There is a large range of resources on the school website for the range of subjects and year. This can be found at:

- <http://www.standrewspaisley.com/useful-websites.html>
- <http://www.standrewspaisley.com/departments.html>

A text message will be sent to all families where a student is self-isolating with a link to the Teams Information webpage.

For the rest of this week, Maths and English resources will also be available online. There will also be Maths and English teachers available online to answer any pupil questions. Details will be shared

with relevant parents via text message. For senior pupils in particular, special arrangements will be made to ensure each child is regularly assessed throughout the year – no pupil will miss out.

From after the October break, resources for all subjects and curriculum areas will also be available online. There will also be teachers available online to answer any pupil questions. Details will be shared with relevant parents via text message. For senior pupils in particular, special arrangements will be made to ensure each child is regularly assessed throughout the year – no pupil will miss out.

I would like to end by thanking you for your patience throughout what I know has been a challenging time for all involved. I can assure you nothing is more important to us than the safety of our pupils and staff and we and the school will continue to do everything in our power to look after that.

Further information on health and safety arrangements in our schools and on how we are handling cases of Covid19 in schools can be found on the council website

<http://www.renfrewshire.gov.uk/covid-cases-schools>.

You can also find out more information on what to do if you or your child has symptoms via the NHS Inform website <https://www.nhsinform.scot/illnesses-and-conditions/infections-and-poisoning/coronavirus-covid-19>.

Yours sincerely,

Steven Quinn

Director of Children's Services, Renfrewshire Council

7 October 2020