Monday, November 29th, 2021

Stephenstown, Balbriggan, Co Dublin. K32AX94

*Baile Stiofáin, Baile Brigín, Co. BÁC.* K32AX94

Dear Parents,

Department of Education guidance to schools on managing Covid-19 changes from Monday, November 29th.

These changes centre on a new programme in which antigen tests will be made available to the children in a primary school pod, where a child in the pod has had a PCR test that detected Covid-19. Where two or more confirmed cases of Covid-19 occur in a class, within a seven-day period, outside of a single pod, antigen testing will be offered to the full class.

We hope that this programme of testing will go some way further to preventing the spread of Covid-19 in our school and across the community. However, we must stress that the best way to prevent the spread is to ensure you do not send pupils to school who have any symptoms of sickness.

The new arrangements include the following:

* As soon as a parent receives a ‘detected’/positive PCR test result on their child, the parent should notify the school immediately.
* Once notified of a positive test result, the school will inform the parents of the other children in the pod where the positive case was identified. The identity of any pupil who is positive is never revealed. Only parents of the pupils in the pod are notified of the positive case and asked to get antigen tests.
* Parents of children in the pod can then request antigen tests from the HSE. Parents carry out the antigen test on the day they receive it and every second day until three tests have been administered.
* The parents will administer the antigen tests at home.
* The children continue to attend school if they are not symptomatic, and their antigen tests are negative.
* If a child is symptomatic or has a positive antigen test result, they should restrict their movements at home and book a PCR test immediately.
* Please note: We can inform the parents of all pupils in a class of a positive case in the class if the parent of the pupil who is positive consents to informing the whole class. We would like to do this, and we will ask you for this consent. This does not mean any other child can receive an antigen test – merely it is our way of keeping parents informed of the current Covid-19 situation in their child’s class.

As we are notified of positive cases, the school will send a letter home to the children from the pod where the positive case occurred (this will be via Aladdin). We also hope to send you the link to the HSE website where you can request the antigen tests once the link becomes available. More information is available via the HSE Covid helpline, the number is below.

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The following pages also provide some ‘questions and answers’ for parents. I hope they are of some help to you. Please phone or email the school if you have any further questions.

We thank you for your understanding and co-operation as we progress through these new guidelines. Thank you to each family for adhering to these guidelines to try to stop the spread of Covid-19 and to keep everyone safe in our school community.

Kind regards,

Deirdre Corcoran

**Question & Answers about Covid – Monday 29th November 2021**

Who informs me of a positive case in my child’s pod?  
You will also receive a letter to let you know that there is a positive case in your child’s class.

What is a pod?  
A pod is a small group that your child sits in, usually 4-6 children.

Why does my child need to take antigen tests?

Your child has been sitting in the same pod as a child who has tested positive.

Who administers the antigen test?  
Parents will administer the antigen tests.  
  
Where do I get an antigen test?  
Parents can register online for antigen tests. The link will be in the letter that your child receives. The antigen tests will then be posted out to the address you register.  
  
How do I administer the test?

Please follow the instructions on the package as there are different brands of tests. The three tests should be administered every two days (see earlier information on this, above).

Can the children in this pod return to school?  
Yes, children in the pod can return to school or stay in school on the basis that they have no symptoms and have negative antigen test results.

Should I give my child the antigen test if I have symptoms?

No, you should book a HSE PCR test if your child has symptoms. They should remain out of school. Please book online - https://covid19test.healthservice.ie/hse-self-referral/  
  
If my child is positive, how do I inform the school?  
Please email or phone us on 8416948 or via email at scoilchormaiccns@ddletb.ie.

You can also send a message to your class teacher on Dojo The family must organise a HSE PCR test for anyone who tests positive on an antigen test. The child must not return to school.   
  
When do I send my child back to school?

When their antigen test is negative or if they have a positive PCR result, after 10 days of isolation, if they no longer have symptoms.   
  
Who do I tell if my child is positive?  
Please email the school or phone us.  
  
What do I do if a household contact, parent, or sibling tests positive?  
The entire family must restrict their movements for 5 days and get tested.

Are antigen tests mandatory?  
No but we ask you to co-operate with us about this matter to keep everyone safe and to avoid the spread of Covid.

Is my child exempt from taking antigen tests if they have had Covid before?  
Yes if the child has had Covid in the past 8 months, they don’t need to take antigen tests.

If I receive a letter from school, do my other children, not in the class mentioned in the letter have to remain out of school?

No, children from other classes should come to school as normal.

What if there are two pods that have positive covid cases in the class?  
Where there are two pods affected in the class, antigen tests will be recommended for all children in the class.

What schoolwork should my child complete at home?

Your child will have their schoolbooks with them, and your child’s class teacher will get in touch regarding work they should complete.