

August 2020

Dear Parents and Carers

### **Excellent Attendance – School Re-opening, Covid-19, Persistent Absence and holidays**

As you will be aware, it is the Government's mandate that schools should re-open for all children from September 2020 and we are looking forward to welcoming them back. Many of you will have questions about attendance: this letter and the Covid-19 Attendance Guidance [also attached here] set out what will be expected from parents, carers and students, as well as answering some of the more frequently asked questions.

The Government has said that it **expects all children of compulsory school age to return to school from September 2020**, with only a very few exceptions. This means that school attendance will be mandatory from the beginning of the school year on 3<sup>rd</sup> September, and the legal duty on parents and carers to send their child to school will apply.

We appreciate that due to the Covid-19 pandemic and school closure last year that some students may be anxious about returning to school after such a long time away, particularly in Years 8, 9, 10 and 12, who did not get to come into school regularly in June and July. If this is the case with your child please contact your Head of Year as soon as possible and before the start of term, so that we can understand and address any concerns your child or you as parents and carers have. Working together we would hope that through explaining our safety plan or arranging a school visit when the rest of the school are not in and employing other strategies, we can help your child move forward to attending regularly again.

We will first and foremost seek to work with you to get your child back to school and will give a little more time than we would normally to resolve potential issues with attending school. However, the law states that children of statutory school age who are on roll at a school or academy must attend regularly and punctually. Roundwood Park operates the Penalty Notice process for 15 or more unauthorised sessions of absence [equivalent to 7.5 days because one session is half a day] in the current or previous term, which follows the law, Local Authority guidance and is policy amongst all Harpenden Schools.

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The Penalty Notice requires you to pay a fine of £60 within 21 days. If this fine is not paid within the time limit the penalty rises to £120 which must be paid within 28 days (e.g. two parents with two children could incur a total cost of £480). If parents and carers do not pay the fine they will be liable for prosecution for this offence. Penalty Notices are administered by the Local Authority and they have the responsibility for issuing them to parents and carers.

That said, with Covid-19 still a potential threat in our community, if your child is exhibiting Covid-19 symptoms then they must be kept at home and you should book a Covid-19 test that day. If the test proves to be negative and your child no longer has symptoms similar to Covid-19 then your child can return to school immediately, ideally the next day. If the test result is positive then please consult the ***Covid-19 Attendance Guidance, also attached to this email***, to know what to do next and how long they will be absent from school.

When well enough, your child will be able to continue learning or catch-up on work missed while at home, because teachers will be providing them with the work done in class via Google Classroom, so that it can be completed remotely during their period of self-isolation.

**Every day ailments such as a common cold can usually be self-managed by a student in school with suitable over the counter medication. Please, unless your child is seriously unwell, showing Covid-19 symptoms or tests positive for Covid-19, do encourage them into school to ensure that they do not miss out on learning and social opportunities.**

Since September 2015 the Government has set the threshold for Persistent Absence to 10%, classing any student with attendance below 90% as a persistent absentee. This equates to just over 3 days of absence per half term and applies if the absence is authorised or unauthorised.

If a student were to get a score of 90% on a maths test this would be very good. If, however, a student's attendance is 90% over their five years of compulsory school age, from Year 7 to 11, this equates to missing half a year of school, which clearly is detrimental to any individual, regardless of their academic ability.

Missing school means missing out on learning and this can have an impact on a child's development and attainment as well as their personal development. In certain circumstances non-attendance can also raise safeguarding concerns and lead to poor mental health. There is a strong statistical link between attendance and attaining good examination results which will potentially open doors for our students. Additionally, it is through good attendance that students maximise their full potential, enhancing their life chances for the future. There will be an impact on your child's education and exam results if their attendance is not consistently above 95% throughout their schooling – as well as on their general well-being.

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This is why we set the minimum target of higher than 96% attendance for every student to achieve. We also appreciate that of course on rare occasions students can be seriously unwell, which is why we celebrate attendance that is higher than 98% as exceptionally good, rather than only 100% as some other schools do.

### **Requests for absences during term time**

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006

The amendments make clear that Headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. As a parent or carer you are strongly urged to avoid booking holidays during term time. If your child is absent from school because of a holiday which has not been agreed, this will be classified as an unauthorised absence and this may lead to a Penalty Notice. By taking family holidays during the designated holiday periods, you will be supporting your child's full school attendance, learning and development. There are 13 weeks of the year to take holidays out of term time.

Thank you for your continued support and I hope by working together we can help your child reach their full potential and make the most of all their opportunities at Roundwood Park.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "A Henshall". The signature is written in a cursive style with a capital 'A' and 'H'.

Alan Henshall  
**Headteacher**

## Parents guide to School Attendance from Autumn, 2020

As you will be aware, it is the Government’s mandate that schools should re-open for all children from September 2020, and we are looking forward to welcoming them back. Many of you will have questions about attendance: this guidance sets out what will be expected from parents and students, as well as answering some of the more frequently asked questions. It is based on the guidance set out on the Government website at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/actions-for-schools-during-the-coronavirus-outbreak/guidance-for-full-opening-schools>

and also, at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/what-parents-and-carers-need-to-know-about-early-years-providers-schools-and-colleges-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-outbreak/what-parents-and-carers-need-to-know-about-early-years-providers-schools-and-colleges-in-the-autumn-term>

### Attendance becomes mandatory from September 2020

The Government has said that it **expects all children of compulsory school age to return to school from September 2020**, with only a very few exceptions, given below under ‘Exceptional Circumstances’. This means that school attendance will once again be mandatory from the beginning of the school year, and *the legal duty on parents and carers to send their child to school* regularly will apply.

A student who is unable to attend school due to either specific clinical or Public Health advice, in these exceptional circumstances and with medical evidence provided, will not be penalised for their absence. For all other absences without a valid reason, the school and the Local Authority have a range of legal powers to enforce attendance.

### Exceptional circumstances

Exceptional Circumstances	Guidance	Guidance & medical evidence provided by
Tested positive for COVID-19	Self-isolate for <b>10</b> days or until symptoms are gone	Government / Public Health England
“Close contact” with someone who has tested positive for COVID-19 (examples given below)	Self-isolate for <b>14</b> days	Government / Public Health England
Under 18 and Clinically Extremely Vulnerable – asthma, diabetes, epilepsy, kidney disease *	<b>Advised to stop shielding from 1 August 2020, <u>so can return to school</u></b> – see also guidance below*	Paediatric specialist or GP
Under 18 and Clinically Extremely Vulnerable – receiving cancer care, or at risk of severe infection due to immunodeficiency *	<b>Advised to pause shielding from 1 August 2020, so can return to school</b> - see also guidance below*	Paediatric specialist or GP

- \* In relation to shielding, please see Government guidance at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-on-shielding-and-protecting-extremely-vulnerable-persons-from-covid-19/guidance-on-shielding-and-protecting-extremely-vulnerable-persons-from-covid-19#clinically-extremely-vulnerable-children-and-young-people-0-to-18>
- \* All decisions on whether children and young people should be removed from the shielded patient list (and therefore will not be advised to shield again in future if transmission starts to increase significantly) should be based on a consultation with your paediatric specialist or your GP who will be in touch over the summer to have these discussions. ***If, in the professional judgement of your paediatric specialist or GP, your child should not attend school after 1 August 2020, you will be required to provide a copy of a physician's letter confirming this.***

The current advice from Public Health England is that, if a student has symptoms of COVID-19, they and their household should self-isolate and arrange for a COVID-19 test immediately. If they test negative they can return to school immediately if they no longer have symptoms similar to coronavirus (COVID-19), and other family members can stop self-isolating too and return to school.

If they tested positive for the virus, they should self-isolate and not attend school for 10 days, from the onset of their symptoms and then return to school only if they do not have symptoms ***other than cough or loss of sense of smell/taste***. This is because a cough or anosmia can last for several weeks once the infection has gone. The 10-day period starts from the day when they first became ill. If they still have a high temperature, they should keep self-isolating until their temperature returns to normal. Other members of their household should continue self-isolating for the full 14 days.

Similarly, if another member of their household, including a sibling, has tested positive for COVID-19, or there has been close contact (examples provided by the Government are given below) with someone who has tested positive for COVID-19, the student should self-isolate and not attend school for 14 days.

Direct close contacts are when a person has:

- face to face contact with an infected individual for any length of time, within 1 metre, including:
  - being coughed on
  - having a face to face conversation,
  - unprotected physical contact (skin-to-skin)
- proximity contacts - extended close contact (within 1 to 2 metres for more than 15 minutes) with an infected individual
- travelled in a small vehicle, like a car, with an infected person

If someone in a class or group that has been asked to self-isolate, due to probable 'close contacts', develops symptoms themselves within their 14-day isolation period they should follow ['stay at home: guidance for households with possible or confirmed coronavirus \(COVID-19\) infection'](#). They should also get a test, and:

- if the test delivers a negative result, they must remain in isolation for the remainder of the 14-day isolation period. This is because they could still develop the coronavirus (COVID-19) within the remaining days.
- if the test result is positive, they should inform their setting immediately, and should isolate for at least 10 days from the onset of their symptoms (which could mean the self-isolation ends before or after the original 14-day isolation period). Their household should self-isolate for at least 14 days from when the symptomatic person first had symptoms,

Household members, most often siblings, of those *contacts* who are sent home due to probable 'close contact' with someone who has tested positive for Covid-19, do not need to self-isolate themselves unless the child, young person or staff member who is self-isolating subsequently develops symptoms or test positive.

The Government is advising that adults and children who have been shielding no longer need to do so from 1 August, subject to the continued decline in the rates of community transmission of COVID-19. Students who have been shielding (whether for themselves or for another household member) will therefore be able to return to school in September.

#### **Advice for students in terms of how they can help minimise spread**

The school has published a plan and a full risk assessment to parents that details a number of measures designed to minimise the spread of the virus, following guidance provided by the Government. Parents are asked to ensure that students also familiarise themselves with these documents and current Public Health guidance, in order to safeguard themselves and their classmates. Inside school and in the wider community this includes:

- Regular hand-washing and use of hand sanitiser;
- Maintaining the recommended social distancing between themselves and others at all times;
- Minimising contact outside of the 'bubbles' to which they have been assigned;
- "Catch it, bin it, kill it;"
- Letting a member of staff know if they feel unwell during the day, or have any symptoms of COVID-19, so that the appropriate steps can be taken to isolate them from their classmates.

To support these efforts, parents should ensure that students self-isolate and do not attend school if they have been contacted by **the NHS Track & Trace service** because they have been in close contact with someone who has tested positive for COVID-19.

#### **A SUMMARY OF WHAT TO DO IF MY CHILD IS UNWELL:**

**Contact details for all absences:**

01582 714049

[Absence@roundwoodpark.co.uk](mailto:Absence@roundwoodpark.co.uk)

**PLEASE DO NOT SEND YOUR CHILD TO SCHOOL IF THEY HAVE SYMPTOMS OF COVID-19 OR IF THEY HAVE A POSITIVE COVID-19 TEST RESULT WITHIN THE LAST 10 DAYS.**

**IF THEY HAVE SYMPTOMS BOOK THEM A COVID-19 TEST IMMEDIATELY. IF THE TEST RESULT IS NEGATIVE THEY CAN RETURN TO SCHOOL IMMEDIATELY, IF THEY NO LONGER HAVE SYMPTOMS SIMILAR TO CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19)**

#### **What to do if your child is unwell**

1. Please telephone or email the school Absence line (details above) to let us know
2. Let us know the reason for absence - do the symptoms suggest COVID-19? If so, please immediately book and then advise us of the date of the COVID-19 test, and provide us with a copy of the results as soon as these are available
3. If they test positive, the student will need to self-isolate for 10 days, and then return to school, when they do not have symptoms ***other than cough or loss of sense of smell/taste.***
4. If they receive a negative test result, they must return to school immediately, if they no longer have symptoms similar to coronavirus (COVID-19) – returning to school once a copy of the test results has been provided to us in advance.

#### **What to do if your child tests positive for COVID-19**

1. Please telephone or email the school Absence line (details above) to let us know;
2. Please provide a copy of the test results; your child will need to self-isolate for 10 days, or until the symptoms have gone, if longer – please do not send your child back to school before this;
3. ***If you have a sibling at the school they will also need to immediately self-isolate, for 14 days.***

#### **What to do if your child comes into contact with someone who tests positive for COVID-19**

Note – this could be a family member, a classmate or any other person with whom they have had face to face contact.

1. Please telephone or email the school Absence line (details above) to let us know;
2. Your child will need to self-isolate for 14 days, at the end of which they may return to school so long as they do not have COVID-19 symptoms and have not tested positive for COVID-19 test;
3. ***Please do not send your child back to school until the 14 days have elapsed, even if they tested negative with a Covid-19 test – we will be tracking this closely, so please do not attempt to send your child back to school any earlier – to keep everyone safe.***

#### **All other absences**

All other absences should be notified in the usual way using either the Absence telephone line or email address (details given above).

#### **Frequently Asked Questions:**

Q:	<b>My child has had a temperature, above 37.6 degrees Celsius for 2 days but now feels fine, can they return to school?</b>
A:	No – they must have a test as soon as you detect a possible symptom and if the result is positive should self-isolate for at least 10 days in accordance with the Government guidance, or longer if they continue to display symptoms.

Q:	<b>Someone in my child's class has tested positive for COVID-19, will the whole school be closing?</b>
A:	We will work with the Director of Public Health, and the local health protection team to determine an appropriate response; this will depend on whether it is an isolated case or a localised outbreak. The safety measures we are implementing as a school to minimise transmission should mean that whole school closure would be unnecessary, but the local health protection team will determine whether to implement additional measures such as a mobile testing unit, class or year group self-isolation.
Q:	<b>NHS Track &amp; Trace have asked my child to self-isolate due to coming into contact with someone who tested positive for COVID-19, will s/he be getting any work to do from home?</b>
A:	Yes – your child's teachers will be providing them with work to be completed remotely during their period of self-isolation via Google Classroom.
Q:	<b>I have not seen my family during lockdown, I have booked a trip which means that my children will not be back in school for the start of term. Will my child be penalised for this?</b>
A:	Any holidays taken in school time must be approved, in advance, by the Headteacher – permission will only be granted in <i>exceptional</i> circumstances. Therefore, parents should plan their holidays within the published school holidays and avoid seeking permission to take their children out of school during term time. <b><i>If you choose to take a holiday in school time or in a country that requires them to quarantine on their return to the UK (which prevents them from attending school), then these absences will be unauthorised and could quickly result in a fixed penalty notice being issued.</i></b>
Q:	<b>I had a positive test for the COVID-19 virus a few weeks ago, do I need to self-isolate again if I come into contact with someone who has recently tested positive for COVID-19?</b>
A:	Yes – you need to self-isolate for a further 14 days. If you have previously tested positive for COVID-19, you will probably have developed some short-term immunity to the disease. However, it is not certain that will happen for everyone who has had COVID-19, nor do we know how long any immunity to the disease might last. For this reason, if you are notified that you are a contact of someone who has had a positive test result for COVID-19, you must immediately self-isolate.