

Wednesday, 5th January, 2022:

Dear Parents, Guardians and Students,

We hope that you all had a safe and restful Christmas and New Year.

Malahide Community is committed to in-person delivery of the curriculum in a safe manner.

We will endeavor to do this, while helping to minimise the risk or onward spread associated with COVID-19, especially in light of the prevalence of the Omicron variant, within our school and within our community.

Enclosed, please find important advice from the Dept. of Education and Public Health.

At the end of this notification, please also find some important notifications from MCS.

To ensure the safe reopening of MCS, Public Health has asked us to communicate the following to the school community:

Public Health has fully reviewed the measures in effect in schools and continues to advise that the two most important actions to prevent the introduction and spread of COVID-19 (and other respiratory viruses), are:

- ensuring no-one with new onset symptoms attends school, and;
- that all recommended infection prevention and control measures are in place in line with school COVID-19 response plans.

These measures include the use of appropriate hand hygiene, enhanced cleaning, good ventilation practices, mask wearing requirement, maximising physical distancing and antigen testing. Public Health has confirmed that there is no change to these infection prevention and control measures.

Students / Symptoms / Tests:

Students who have symptoms of COVID-19 should stay at home, isolate and arrange to have a COVID-19 test.

There are 2 types of COVID-19 test available from the HSE: antigen tests (home test kits) and PCR tests (done at a test centre and sent to a lab).

Students who have symptoms of COVID-19 are offered antigen tests firstly and they do not book a PCR test unless they get a positive antigen test result.

Note – If a student is identified as a CLOSE CONTACT of a case in their HOUSEHOLD they will have to restrict their movement as per national guidelines for

household close contacts and get a COVID-19 test as soon as possible.

Further information is available at

<https://www2.hse.ie/conditions/covid19/testing/get-tested/>

The Dept. of Education have advised that the student who tests positive will have to isolate for 10 days from the day their symptoms started or for 10 days from the day they had the positive PCR test. The student can return to school after this isolation period, provided they do not have a fever/temperature during the last 5 days of their isolation period. Public Health has advised that children under 13 years who are household close contacts must restrict their movements for 14 days. They are offered PCR testing on day 0 and day 10. On receipt of a day 10 not-detected PCR test result, they may exit restricted movements.

1) Before attending school:

Public Health has asked us to inform you that your child is not to attend school if they present with any symptoms of Covid-19 infection.

Symptom profiles are available here:

<https://www2.hse.ie/conditions/covid19/symptoms/overview/>

Remember, if a child appears unwell, observe them at home and contact your GP as appropriate.

Close contacts:

If you have been told by the HSE services that your child is a close contact of a case of Covid-19, you need to adhere to the advice on the HSE website in relation to restricted movements and testing. It is important that anyone who has been identified as a close contact, is very aware of COVID-19 symptoms, and isolates and undergoes testing, should they develop any symptoms.

2) Re-enforcing general public health messages

Public Health has asked schools to remind everyone of the importance of abiding by the national Public Health measures currently in place at all times: e.g. vaccination (including boosters), social distancing, use of face masks, hand hygiene, ventilation and minimising social contacts.

Further information can be found at:

<https://www.hpsc.ie/a-z/respiratory/coronavirus/novelcoronavirus/guidance/educationguidance/> <https://www2.hse.ie/conditions/covid19/>

For education specific guidance, please see:

<https://www.gov.ie/en/campaigns/a128d-back-to-school/>

Students are asked to continue to adhere to our MCS Covid Response Plan.

In keeping with advice from the Dept.of Education, if operational challenges occur due to staff absences, we will endeavour to prioritise on-site education for our SEN students, state examination year groups and Fifth Year classes.

Unfortunately, in consultation with the Board of Management, we will be asking our TY students to stay home for Thursday and Friday of this week. Their Teachers have been asked to provide work to their classes on Schoology and students are respectfully asked to engage remotely and to comply with our Remote Teaching and Learning Protocols.

Please note that our Canteen facilities are unavailable until next Monday at the earliest, due to Canteen staff shortages. Students are advised to bring their own lunch and water with them each day.

Please also note that students are reminded to layer up due to the cold weather.

We will continue to keep the current evolving situation under review and we will remain in frequent communication with you.

We thank you sincerely for all of your support with this.

Kindest regards,

MCS