

What is a bubble?

The current government advice is to keep children and staff safe by keeping children in separate groups. These are known as 'bubbles.' The government have stated that in primary schools that the emphasis is on separating groups rather than social distancing which is more important and effective in secondary schools. This is due to a variety of reasons. Children struggle to distance at a young age; primary schools are also smaller and we are still expected, following guidance, to have around 30 children learning in each classroom and group.

Maintaining distinct groups or 'bubbles' that do not mix makes it quicker and easier in the event of a positive case to identify who needs to self-isolate and keeps as many children in school as possible. Children do not share their classrooms with any other bubbles which means they are kept safe within their classroom. The government have advised that adults should maintain 2 metre distance from each other, and from the children in their bubble. However, they recognise that this is not always appropriate or possible when working with primary age children.

Government advice states that children should sit side by side facing forward, rather than face to face. This is known as 'forward facing.' Therefore, we are following government guidance that children will not stay 1 or 2 metres apart within their bubble.

Why has my child been asked to self-isolate?

When a confirmed case of COVID-19 has been reported for a pupil or member of staff, we will work quickly to keep the school community safe. We will ring Public Health England who will advise us on our next steps. Anyone who has been in the same bubble as the affected child or member of staff will be asked to self-isolate for 14 days.

What does it mean if my child has been asked to self-isolate?

Your child will be asked to stay at home if they have been in a bubble with someone who has tested positive for COVID-19. Your child should not return to school until notified. They must stay at home for the isolation period and you should look out for any symptoms during this time. If your child or anyone in your family develops symptoms, you should book a test and self-isolate.

What does self-isolation mean?

Self-isolation means stay at home and do not leave the house for 14 days. It is very important you follow this advice even if your child feels well, as symptoms can take up to 14 days to appear from your last contact with the person who tested positive for COVID-19. Self-isolating in this way will help protect your family, friends, the wider community and the NHS.

Therefore, your child must not go to school, use public transport or taxis, go to the shops. Exercise should be taken at home. If your child does not develop symptoms of COVID-19, you should not book a test.

Do I need to self-isolate if my child has been sent home?

No, you and your family do not need to self-isolate during this time. If your children are in another year group, they must attend school and older members of the family can still go to work. You should monitor yourself and your family's symptoms during this time. If you develop symptoms, you will need to self-isolate and book a COVID-19 test. This is following government guidelines which have been followed by school.

What if my child returns to school and begins to develop symptoms?

If your child begins to develop symptoms, you should ensure they stay at home. Book a test. If the result is positive, contact school immediately. Your child will need to self-isolate for 10 days. The rest of the household will need to self-isolate for 14 days and check for symptoms.

What symptoms should I look out for?

- a high temperature (above 38 degrees) – this means you feel hot to touch on your chest or back
- 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

Why must I ensure my child attends school if they were not in the effected bubble?

In March, when the coronavirus pandemic was increasing, no parent was penalised or sanctioned for their child's non-attendance at school. Now the circumstances have changed, it is vital for all children to return to school to minimise, as far as possible, the longer-term impact of the pandemic on our children's education, wellbeing and wider development. Missing out on time in the classroom risks pupils falling further behind. Those with higher overall absence tend to achieve less well in both primary and secondary school. School attendance is mandatory from the beginning of the autumn term. This will mean if children do not attend school, schools will be asked to issue sanctions, including fixed penalty notices. We understand that this is a time of anxiety for you and your family, but we must ensure children are attending school as their education is very important. If your child has been asked to come to school while another year bubble is still closed, it means your child has had no contact with the effected case and therefore are safe to come to school.

How can I keep my child and family safe at home?

We are following the government guidance for schools to keep our children safe. We also need all parents to continue to follow government guidance at home and ensure that they are keeping socially distant from one another. All parents should follow the government guidance of 'Hands, Face, Space'. This means washing hands frequently, using masks to prevent the spread of the virus when in public, confined spaces and keeping 2 meters apart from others outside your household. We need you to remain in your household bubbles and not be socialising in large groups (above 6 people) as this makes it extremely difficult to track the cases.