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Dear Parent/Carer

It has been great to see so many children and young people returning to school and the work that has been undertaken locally to ensure a safe return.

As we often see at the start of a new term, some children and young people will pick up viruses and other bugs from others and feel unwell, though in most cases this will not be Covid.

However, it is difficult to rule Covid out when children and young people have Covid related symptoms, as children usually have much milder symptoms than adults.

Covid has not gone away and it remains extremely important that any child with symptoms of Covid stays away from school to avoid the risk of spreading infection to others, including the more vulnerable in our communities. This is the reason we ask children and young people with Covid related symptoms to isolate at home until they get a test result.

The symptoms are:

- **high temperature** – feeling hot to touch on your chest or back (you do not need to measure your temperature)
- **new, continuous cough** – 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)
- **loss or change to your sense of smell or taste** – you cannot smell or taste anything, or things smell or taste different from normal

Over the last week we have seen a number of children being referred for a Covid test in accordance with national guidance and we are very aware that in Torbay, as elsewhere, there have been worrying delays in accessing tests. This is a national issue as laboratory capacity is not keeping up with current demand. We understand how frustrating this can be, particularly with children being asked to stay off school until they can get a Covid test. However, it is crucial that we keep our schools open, and continue to keep our children and communities safe.

We therefore ask that you continue to follow government guidance and keep your child at home, and book a test as soon as you are able. You only need to get a test if your child has the symptoms listed above. If your child has these symptoms, it is really important that you do not send them to school. The test is best done in the first 5 days of having symptoms.

The current routes for getting a national test is to book a test online at <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/symptoms/coronavirus-in-children/> or by calling 119. If you cannot book a national test immediately, please try again at a later time as the system is currently very busy.

If you require this in a different format or language, please contact me.



As the national testing issues continue, we are also doing all we can locally and are working with local providers to enable some local testing. Therefore, if parents or carers are unable to book a slot with the national system they can also email **d-ccg.cornwalldevon.urgenttesting@nhs.net** making it clear the test is for a child attending a Torbay school.

Parents and carers will be supported to access local testing wherever possible. We are also working hard to put additional local arrangements in place to boost our local testing availability until national testing capacity can be increased and we will update you as soon as the situation changes.

If you are unable to secure a test, it is important that your child remains away from school for the 10 day isolation period. As part of creating a Covid safe school, children must not return before the isolation period is over. Please work with your school to help keep all children and young people safe.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Caroline Dimond', written in a cursive style.

Caroline Dimond

Director of Public Health