16th September 2020

To all Parents, Carers & Colleagues
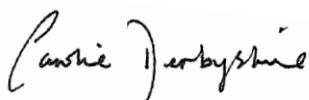Saffron Academy Trust

Dear Parents, Carers & Colleagues,

As you know, schools in Saffron Academy Trust have worked hard to open to all children this term and have put significant 'Covid-safe' rules and procedures in place.  What you will also know is that the smooth functioning of our schools needs to be backed up by a solid Covid-19 testing system at a national and local level.  This testing system, however, appears to be under severe strain.  A number of our parents and staff members have found it very difficult to get a timely or local test.  I have raised concerns about this matter with Government representatives and the Local Authority and efforts are being made to improve testing, but in the meantime the system is not meeting our needs.

In particular, when a teacher is isolating and awaiting either a test or test result, their lessons have to be covered.  Each school can only continue to remain open to all children if staff absence is reasonably minimal.  When it reaches a 'tipping point' and classes can no longer be covered, it is inevitable that groups, years or a whole school of children might need to be sent home.  This is why a speedy and efficient testing system is so vital – so that we can get teachers back into the classroom if they do not have Covid-19 and are well enough to teach.

One of the reasons that the testing system is under such strain is that some tests have proved unnecessary.  The NHS guidance indicates that tests should only be sought if someone exhibits at least one of the three key symptoms associated with Covid-19: a new, <u>continuous</u> cough (one that lasts), high temperature, or the loss of taste or smell.  As we reach the season of colds and sniffles, common symptoms of mild illness such as non-continuous coughs, sore throats, runny and blocked noses and headaches are fairly normal and standard at this time of year and do not require a Covid-19 test.  Covid-19 tests should be reserved for those with at least one of the three key symptoms.  Please consult the NHS guidance on what to do if you or your child has Covid-19 symptoms and act upon it rather than contacting your school to ask for medical advice from our Office teams.  As much as we would like to help, we are not medically qualified to do so.  Advice from the NHS website is enclosed below and further guidance can be found at https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/

At Saffron Academy Trust we dearly wish to remain open to teach children and we remain optimistic that the current national testing crisis will be addressed rapidly.  We can all help to relieve pressure from this system by getting a test only when it is necessary.

Yours sincerely,

**Caroline Derbyshire**
**CEO, Saffron Academy Trust**

# Check if you or your child has coronavirus symptoms

If you have any of the main symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19), get a test as soon as possible. Stay at home until you get the result.

**Main symptoms**

The main symptoms of coronavirus are:

- **a high temperature** – this means you feel hot to touch on your chest or back (you do not need to measure your temperature)
- **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

Most people with coronavirus have at least 1 of these symptoms.

**What to do if you have symptoms**

If you have any of the main symptoms of coronavirus:

1. Get a test to check if you have coronavirus as soon as possible.
2. Stay at home and do not have visitors until you get your test result – only leave your home to have a test.

Anyone you live with, and anyone in your support bubble, must also stay at home until you get your result.

**Get a test to check if you have coronavirus**

**Urgent advice:Use the NHS 111 online coronavirus service if:**

- you're worried about your symptoms
- you're not sure what to do

**Use the NHS 111 online coronavirus service**

Call 111 if you cannot get help online. Do not go to places like a GP surgery, hospital or pharmacy.

Do not delay getting help if you're worried. Trust your instincts.

Get more advice about coronavirus in children