

January 19, 2022

“The more things change, the more they stay the same.”-Alphonse Karr

Dear Parents,

First and foremost, I thank you for all that you have done to help keep our Woodland family safe over the last two years. It is through the diligent efforts of our families, faculty, staff, and Board that we have remained open and in seat bringing the best in education to your children. There are some common-sense strategies that will continue to keep everyone safe when we all abide by them. Several of them ask, as per our school prayer, for you to “choose the hard right against the easy wrong” in adhering to the **NEW** guidelines set forth by the CDC and the State of New Jersey to continue to keep our Woodland family safe.

On January 4, 2022, the CDC updated their guidance on Isolation and Quarantine based on several factors - the impact of COVID-19 infections due to the Omicron variant, when and for how long a person is maximally infectious with Omicron, the effectiveness of COVID-19 vaccines and booster doses against Omicron infection, and adherence to prevention interventions. The Cumberland County Health Department has just adopted the new guidelines. Throughout the pandemic, Woodland has relied on the experts at the local health department to help keep our family safe. We will continue to review their recommendations as they are issued.

Some common-sense recommendations have not changed. Please remember to keep your child home when he or she does not feel well and to notify the school when doing so. Unfortunately, there continues to be examples where students across grade levels have been sent home because of illness. The last thing we want to do is to inconvenience you by calling you to pick up your child if your child is ill, so please keep your child home when he or she is not feeling well. Your child must be fever-free and feeling well for 48 hours before he or she returns. You must also provide a note from your doctor for your child to return to school.

If a member of your household tests positive for COVID-19, please keep your child at home. This is essential for the protection of our entire Woodland family. Although we are notified by the health department when a child in our school tests positive, we respectfully ask that you also immediately notify the school. Please keep your child home if he or she has a pending COVID-19 test. Do not send your child to school until the results are received and be sure to notify the school if those results are positive. Finally, do not send your child to school if he or she has tested positive for COVID-19.

Here are the new CDC Guidelines for persons who test positive for COVID-19 and are symptomatic or persons with COVID-19 symptoms who weren't tested or who are waiting for test results: 1. Stay home and isolate from other people for at least 5 full days (day 0 is the first day of symptoms). 2. If symptoms resolve, isolation can end after 5 full days (i.e., on day 6). 3. If symptoms persist, continue to isolate until fever-free for 24 hours and other symptoms have improved.

There are also new guidelines for persons who test positive for COVID-19 but have no symptoms. They include: 1. Stay home and isolate from other people for at least 5 full days (day 0 is the day of the positive viral test). 2. If no symptoms develop, isolation can end after 5 full days (i.e., on day 6). 3. If symptoms develop within one week of the positive test, the 5-day isolation period starts over with day 0 being the first day of symptoms. Follow the recommendations for ending isolation for persons who have COVID-19 symptoms.

Quarantine is a strategy used to prevent transmission of COVID-19 by keeping people who have been in close contact with someone with COVID-19 apart from others. Persons having close contact with someone who is in their isolation period would be considered exposed and should be tested for COVID-19 and may need to quarantine, depending on vaccination status and if recently recovered. Persons having close contact with someone who has completed their isolation period but who is still taking additional precautions through day 10 is not considered exposed for the purpose of quarantine but should self-monitor for symptoms for 10 days and if concerned about possible exposure, get tested for COVID-19.

We all know that testing has become a toilsome task. Given the limitations of testing later in the course of illness, if an individual who is isolating has access to a test and wants to test, the best approach is to use an antigen test towards the end of the 5-day isolation period. Testing should be performed only if fever-free for 24 hours and other symptoms have improved (or if symptoms weren't present). If the antigen test result is positive, continue to isolate until day 10. If the antigen test result is negative, isolation can end, but continue to wear a well-fitting mask around others at home and in public until day 10. In this scenario, negative antigen tests should be used twice over a three-day period with at least 24 hours and no more than 48 hours between tests.

We are here to help. Remember that our website has COVID-19 resources available to help you navigate these challenging times. One great resource is the COVID-19 Daily Screening found at the bottom of the page under “COVID-19 Resources.” It's a great checklist to start your day.

As always, please reach out to the main office, should you have any questions. We are halfway through January. Thank you for your continued cooperation and understanding during these challenging times.

Very truly yours,

Cosmo F. Terrigno, Ed.S.
Headmaster