

12/01/2022

Dear Headteachers,

As we enter the Spring term, we are writing to you with an update on the steps that schools should be taking to keep children and staff safe.

Since September 2021, schools and other educational settings have had several important measures in place to minimise the risk of COVID-19. Please continue to reinforce some of these messages to pupils, staff and parents / guardians. These include:

- Improved ventilation
- Encouraging regular and thorough handwashing and good hygiene
- Encouraging twice-weekly LFD tests by staff and pupils aged 11 and above
- Ensuring staff or pupils stay at home if displaying symptoms of COVID-19 or tested positive
- Encouraging take-up of the COVID-19 vaccines and boosters by staff, parents and pupils when offered

The Government is clear on the critical importance of not disrupting the education of children and young people and will prioritise high quality face to face education to all pupils. The measures set out below will support this.

We strongly encourage all those working in educational and childcare settings and pupils in Year 7 and above to continue regular asymptomatic testing (i.e. lateral flow test - LFT) and [reporting their results](#). Asymptomatic testing is a critical tool to help prevent transmission of COVID-19 by identifying and helping to prevent asymptomatic individuals carrying the virus from transmitting and spreading the virus unknowingly in their educational setting and allowing Educational settings to operate as safely as possible. Staff, Secondary School pupils and Further Education pupils should continue twice weekly LFD testing at home.

The staff, visitors and pupils in Year 7 and above should now **wear face coverings** everywhere on dedicated and public transport as well as school premises including the classroom until 26th of January 2022 at least. After that, they will be advised if they can stop wearing face covering inside classrooms.

Those who test positive are able to end their isolation if they receive two consecutive negative LFT results 24 hours apart, having taken the first LFT on Day 6, where Day 0 is onset date or test date if they were asymptomatic. All children between 5 years to 18 years and 6 months, unless exempt and fully vaccinated adults, who have been identified as **close**

contact of someone with COVID-19, are strongly advised to take an **LFT every day for 7 days and continue to attend the setting as normal, unless they have positive test result.** Staff and pupils with positive LFT should self-isolate and take a PCR test and while waiting for PCR results, the individuals will continue to self-isolate. Unvaccinated contacts should continue to isolate for 10 full days and [get a PCR test](#).

Staff, children and young people previously considered Clinically Extremely Vulnerable (**CEV**) should attend school and should follow the same COVID-19 guidance as the rest of the population. In some circumstances, a member of staff, child or young person may have received personal advice from their specialist or clinician on additional precautions to take and they should continue to follow that advice. Whilst individual risk assessments are not required, employers are expected to discuss any concerns that people previously considered CEV may have.

Schools are not required to use the [NHS COVID Pass](#), unless they are holding any specific event (such as a reception, concert or party). Where applicable, schools should follow guidance on [mandatory certification for events](#). Under 18s are exempt from showing their COVID Status but should be counted towards attendance thresholds. NHS COVID Pass should not be used as a condition of entry for education or related activities such as exams, teaching, extra-curricular activities or any other day-to-day activities that are part of education or training. Educations can also use [NHS Covid QR code](#) for events.

All children and staff travelling to England must adhere to government travel advice in [travel to England from another country during coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#). Parents travelling abroad should bear in mind the impact on their child's education which may result from any requirement to quarantine or isolate upon return.

All schools will continue to work with Health Protection teams in case of local outbreak and if there is a substantial increase in the number of cases in the setting, the public health might advise to temporarily reintroduce some control measures.

All schools should have contingency plans (sometimes called outbreak management plans) outlining what you would do if children, pupils, students or staff test positive for COVID-19, or how you would operate if you were advised to take extra measures to help break chains of transmission. Given the detrimental impact that restrictions on education can have on children and young people, any measures in schools should only ever be considered as a last resort, kept to the minimum number of schools or groups possible, and for the shortest amount of time possible. A reminder of the link to BCC's template Outbreak Management Plan is here:

https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/downloads/file/20283/outbreak_management_plan_for_schools_september_2021.

Additional measures local health protection teams may advise schools to consider during an outbreak are listed below:

- Re-introducing class bubbles, this may be most appropriate in younger ages
- Limiting staff members moving between classrooms
- Staff to teach from the front with 2m, where possible
- Holding all school events e.g. assemblies or all staff meetings and open days virtually
- Moving all non-essential events where parents/carers visit schools to virtual
- Staggering break/lunch and start/finish times
- Ensuring visits out of school are COVID-secure
- Staff and pupils aged 11 and above, to test themselves for COVID-19 twice a week, and **more frequently** if they are specifically asked to do so
- COVID-19 management for PE lessons and changing
- Office staff to work from home if they can

There is **support available for people required to self-isolate**. [Test and Trace Support Payment Scheme](#) provides £500 payments to people on means-tested benefits who are unable to work from home and will lose income as a result of self-isolation or being the parent or guardian of a child required to self-isolate.

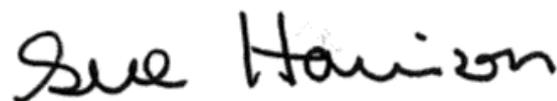
Again, thank you for your understanding and cooperation as schools continue to deal with the challenges of the pandemic. The staff working in Birmingham's schools and settings have worked tirelessly to keep children, families, staff and visitors safe.

We would like to wish you all and your families a very Happy New Year.

Best wishes,



Dr Justin Varney
Director of Public Health



Sue Harrison
Director Education and Skills/Director of
Children's Services