

13 May 2021

Dear Parents and Carers,

We are pleased to report that since your children returned to school in March, Covid-19 case numbers in schools have remained low, meaning the majority of children and young people have been able to remain in school.

You will have seen the national announcements and revisions in arrangements from the 17th May, although there has been very little change to the national schools' guidance ahead of next week. We thought it would be helpful if we wrote to you to highlight the continued expectations in relation to Covid-19 on school sites.

We want to ensure that we continue to keep infection rates in schools and the city low. Covid-19 case rates in Coventry are at around 25 per 100k population, which is higher than the England and West Midlands average with the majority of cases in secondary school-aged children. We must, therefore, continue to remain vigilant, particularly in light of new and emerging variants. This will help us keep children and young people in schools for the remainder of the Summer Term.

Face Coverings in Secondary Schools

The most significant change to the national schools' guidance is that from the 17th May face coverings will no longer be recommended for pupils in classrooms or communal areas. Face coverings will also no longer be recommended for staff in classrooms. In all schools the guidance continues to recommend that face coverings should be worn by staff and visitors in situations outside of classrooms where social distancing is not possible (for example, when moving around in corridors and communal areas).

Despite the national position we continue to be concerned about the ability to socially distance in classrooms, and communal areas, and the threat of Covid-19 variants with increased transmission rates. Locally therefore, we will support all schools who wish to encourage secondary age pupils and staff to continue to wear face coverings where possible, and we will review this further at the half term break based on infection levels and further information in relation to variants. The guidance also states that the reintroduction of face coverings for pupils, students or staff may be advised for a temporary period in response to particular localised outbreaks, including variants of concern. We welcome your continued support in relation to this.

There is no national or local recommendation that children in primary schools wear a face covering within the setting.

Lateral Flow testing (LFT)

It continues to be the national and local expectation that secondary age pupils will take a LFT twice a week, and we urge you to ensure your secondary-age child is tested. LFT continues to be an important tool in managing infection rates and reducing transmission on an ongoing basis. It regularly identifies asymptomatic cases, and therefore reduces transmission and the number of children and young people that may need to isolate.

There is no national recommendation for primary-age pupils to have a LFT. You will be aware, however, that we have extended our LFT Community sites to be able to test children and young people from age 2, and we highly recommend that you do this. You will also be aware that home test kits can be collected from local collection points to be used. Further information is available on LFT Community sites, and accessing home test kits at:

<https://www.coventry.gov.uk/lateralflowtesting>,

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/rapid-lateral-flow-testing-for-households-and-bubbles-of-school-pupils-and-staff>.

Other arrangements

There is little other change to the national schools' guidance ahead of next week, and we are not expecting further changes until the 21st June. Schools will therefore be continuing with their system of controls to manage infection rates such as staggered start and finish times, one way systems and expectation that parents remain socially distanced and wear face coverings on site. Schools will also be continuing to arrange children and young people in groups / bubbles, and managing parents' interactions and pupil transition virtually where possible.

We will continue to review the position in line with the national guidance and local infection rates including variants to prevent any spikes in infection rates prior to the Summer holidays. We are hopeful that schools will be able to resume more normal arrangements from September. We will obviously write to you again ahead of the 21st June to confirm the position.

General Controls

Finally, I would just like to remind you to continue to do the things that you have been doing to keep our education settings safe. These are:

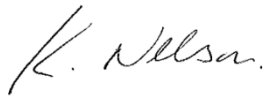
- Not sending your child to their nursery, childminder, school or college if they are showing coronavirus symptoms or someone within the household is showing symptoms
- Arranging a test if you or your child develops symptoms – no matter how mild – and informing the nursery, childminder, school or college of the result.
- Keeping your child at home where they have been identified as having contact with a confirmed case either in school or elsewhere
- Ensuring that the whole household isolate where a household member is awaiting a result, and continued isolation if test result is positive

- Reinforcing with your children how to wash hands, make space and minimise contact
- Supporting your schools by understanding and reinforcing with your children what is expected, including where they are required to wear face covering both in school and on public transport (including dedicated school buses)
- Continuing to adhere to the national guidelines

If you would like any more help and advice around COVID-19, please go to:
<https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus>.

We would like to thank you for your continued support in helping our city reduce COVID-19 and helping schools to be as safe as possible.

Yours sincerely,



Kirston Nelson
Director of Education & Skills



Liz Gaulton
Director of Public Health and Wellbeing