



27 August 2021

Dear parent/carer,

We are pleased to be welcoming your children back to school for the start of the new school year. We continue to ensure our schools are as safe as possible, and as a city we continue to share learning and good practice across all schools.

The infection rate in Coventry is currently 317 people with the virus for every 100,000 of the population and we are expecting this to increase throughout September as children and young people return to schools and as more people return to workplaces.

We want to ensure we can continue to keep schools open, and children and young people engaged in onsite learning. Although children and young people under 18 are no longer required to isolate if they are a close contact of a positive case, our experience in the summer term was that we had school outbreaks where a number of pupils in a school setting tested positive. In these circumstances the Local Authority and Public Health will work with the school to put additional mitigations in place to manage transmission. Closure or partial closure of a school will always be a last resort.

We are therefore taking a cautious approach to return to school and supporting schools where they have decided to continue with some mitigations/measures in the interim, as we monitor the local and national picture throughout September. This may vary from school to school but could include staggered start and finish times and not bringing parents onto site other than for drop off and pick up. This may also mean different arrangements within the school day such as consistent groupings, not returning to full school assemblies, use of face coverings etc. We are grateful for your ongoing understanding and support with this.

Attendance

School attendance is mandatory for all pupils of compulsory school age and it is a priority to ensure that your child regularly attends school. We understand that you may have some concerns about this, particularly where your child has come into contact with someone who has tested positive. We want to reassure you that we are continuing to do everything in our power to minimise transmission in schools.

Face Coverings

We are advising all schools to recommend that parents continue to wear face coverings on the school site when dropping off and picking up children. This is in line with the government position which has removed the requirement to wear face coverings in law

but expects and recommends that they are worn in enclosed and crowded spaces where you may come into contact with people you don't normally meet. Secondary age children are also expected to wear face coverings on public transport (including dedicated school buses).

Lateral Flow testing (LFT)

LFT continues to be an important tool in managing infection rates and reducing transmission on an ongoing basis. It is helpful in identifying asymptomatic cases, and therefore reducing the overall number of children and young people that may be exposed to the infection and subsequently test positive.

It is already in place for secondary age pupils, who will be invited to have two tests on their return to school. Following this, home testing kits will continue to be supplied for pupils to test twice weekly.

There is no national recommendation for primary-age pupils to have a LFT. You will be aware, however, that we locally recommend all children attending a primary school to also regularly test and this can be accessed through community sites or home testing kits: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/testing/regular-rapid-coronavirus-tests-if-you-do-not-have-symptoms/>

General Controls

There are a number of other things that you can also continue to do to help make our education settings safe. These are:

- Ensuring all those eligible in your family have had both their COVID-19 vaccinations. Please see here for drop in clinics across Coventry and Warwickshire and all the sites that you can book into:
<https://www.happyhealthylives.uk/coronavirus/covid-19-vaccination/vaccination-drop-in-clinics/>
<https://www.happyhealthylives.uk/coronavirus/covid-19-vaccination/vaccination-sites/>
Please note that for anyone aged between 16 and 17 years and 9 months they should follow instructions in the letter they have received to book, or attend a drop in clinic (in link above) which states it is for those aged 16 and over.
- Not sending your child to their nursery, childminder, school or college if they are showing coronavirus symptoms, or if they are unwell.
- 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.
- Taking your child for a PCR test where they have been identified as having contact with a confirmed case either in school or elsewhere
- Reinforcing with your children how to wash hands, make space and minimise contact
- Adhering to the current rules and guidance (including additional mitigations in relation to Lateral Flow Testing and face coverings) to help reduce transmission.

- Supporting your schools by understanding and reinforcing with your children what is expected within the school, including wearing face covering on public transport (including dedicated school buses) for secondary age pupils
- Ensuring you wear a face covering when you pick up and drop off students at school sites, and maintain a safe distance from other parents (including not blocking entrances, exits, or immediate areas outside of schools)

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

Yours sincerely,



Kirston Nelson
Director of Education & Skills



Liz Gaulton
Director of Public Health and Wellbeing