

Parents and Carers

25 November 2021

Dear Parents and Carers

Parents' and carers' role in reducing the impact of COVID-19 this winter

COVID-19 infection rates for in school aged children are currently high in East Sussex. There are some key actions that we can all take to reduce the impact of COVID-19 on our lives and help us prepare for Christmas and the winter months ahead.

We would like to ask for your help with:

- continuing to test for COVID-19
- supporting the vaccination programme, particularly for 12–15-year-olds
- the contact tracing process for children who test positive
- supporting any existing or additional measures at your child's school to protect the school community

Testing for covid 19

Secondary school pupils should continue to test twice weekly at home, with a lateral flow device (LFD) test.

Schools are reporting high levels of LFD test positives, but these are not always being followed up with a PCR test to confirm the result. It is important that pupils self-isolate when they have received a positive LFD test result, in line with the stay-at-home guidance for households. **They will also need to get a free PCR test to check if they have COVID-19.** If the PCR test is taken within 2 days of the positive lateral flow test, and is negative, the pupil can return to school if they don't have any COVID-19 symptoms.

Anyone with COVID-19 symptoms can order a PCR test. Symptoms include:

- a high temperature,
- a new, continuous cough – this means coughing a lot, for more than an hour, or 3 or more coughing episodes in 24 hours
- a loss or change to sense of smell or taste

There are a number of ways to get a PCR test, including through the post. See [Get a free PCR test to check if you have coronavirus \(COVID-19\) - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/get-a-free-pcr-test-to-check-if-you-have-coronavirus)

Vaccinations

Coming forward for a vaccination is one of the best things young people can do to protect themselves and those around them. It reduces the likelihood of getting COVID-19, helps limit the spread within schools and reduces the need to take time off school.

If you have children aged 12-15 years who missed their vaccination at school, you can:

- [book their COVID-19 vaccination appointment online](#) for an appointment at a vaccination centre or pharmacy
- check if there is a [walk-in COVID-19 vaccination site](#) near you to get vaccinated without needing an appointment

Contact tracing process

Schools are no longer responsible for contact tracing and this is now done by NHS Test and Trace. For children aged under 18, contact tracing should be completed by parents and carers. Following a positive PCR test result, parents and carers will receive calls from the national test and trace service. These calls will take approximately 30 minutes. If the national NHS test and trace service cannot reach parents, a local tracing team will contact you to complete the process.

Completing contact tracing helps break chains of COVID-19 transmission, reduces disruption to work and education, illness and saves lives. If you need additional support, contact tracing teams can also put you in touch with the help that you need.

We ask that all parents and carers engage with this important process when needed.

End of term events

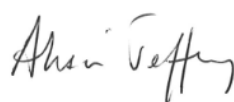
Schools are currently considering how best to manage events at the end of term that may bring large groups of people together. There is currently no national guidance on this issue and decisions will need to be made at a local level, based on infection rates and risk assessments at individual schools. Like us, I am sure that you will support school leaders if they need to change plans due to the rising number of cases in East Sussex.

From Monday, we have asked secondary schools to reintroduce face masks in communal areas to reduce the risk of infection. Over the coming weeks, your school may introduce further measures, such as putting pupils into 'bubbles' and having meetings online. These will help to protect the school community and we thank parents, carers and their children for supporting these measures. We really appreciate the support of all our families and would like to thank you for your continued support in responding to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Yours faithfully,



Darrell Gale FFPH
Director of Public Health



Alison Jeffery
Director of Children's Services