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14 October 2021

Dear parents, carers and pupils,

I hope you are enjoying the new term with less disruption than last year.

The reality is that, while you and your school continue to remain vigilant, Covid-19 is still in our communities and cases in West Sussex schools are very high and rising.

We need to keep working together to limit the spread of the virus. By doing so, our children can continue to go to school safely and the disruption to all our lives will be minimal.

Here are some simple things you can do to support your school:

### **Close contacts should take a PCR test**

Close contacts of people who are Covid-19 positive no longer need to self-isolate, provided they are either double vaccinated or are under the age of 18. This includes household contacts and means that siblings and children of parents/carers with Covid can continue to go to school, provided they don't have symptoms.

Close contacts are strongly advised to get a PCR test but don't have to wait for the result by staying off from school. As an extra protective step, the Government is asking close contacts to also take a home test (LFD) before they attend school, waiting the short time for a negative result whilst they are awaiting the results of the PCR test. Should the LFD test result be positive, you must self-isolate until you receive your PCR results back.

This important step will greatly reduce the chances of your children bringing the virus into school. This includes primary children and we know that even young children soon become familiar with this quick testing.

### **Continue regular home testing**

Students of secondary age and above are strongly encouraged to keep up twice weekly home testing. Research has found that LFD testing is even more effective than first thought at identifying people with the virus when they are most infectious, and results show up quickly. Regular weekly testing will help your school to greatly reduce the chance of outbreaks and allow a continuity of learning for your child.

LFD results must be reported back to school and to: <https://www.gov.uk/report-covid19-result>

You can easily order home test kits by calling 119 or you can pick them up from lots of pharmacies, test sites and shops, search collection sites at: <https://maps.test-and-trace.nhs.uk/findatestcenter>

## Test if you have symptoms

If you or any of your household have symptoms (a new continuous cough; loss or change of taste or smell; high temperature), you/they should go straight to booking a PCR test and isolate while waiting for the result. The whole household can also get a PCR test as close contacts, and as above, children are now asked to take a lateral flow test before attending school.

You should have a PCR test if you are symptomatic, have received a positive LFD, or are identified through NHS Test and Trace as a close contact of a confirmed case.

## Vaccinations

Covid-19 vaccinations are available for anyone aged 16 and over and for children aged 12-15. The Sussex Vaccination Programme is being run by the NHS and 16s and over can either book a test or simply [visit a walk-in centre near them](#).

The national 12-15 programme is being delivered by trained NHS School Age Immunisation Service teams in schools and parents will be sent all of the details by their school.

You can find out about the Sussex Vaccination Programme, including for 12-15s, at: <https://www.sussexhealthandcare.uk/keepsussexsafe/sussex-covid-19-vaccination-programme/> I would urge you to read the official scientific information about vaccinations which you can find through the above website.

## Support your school with any measures they bring in

Individual schools can take decisions about reintroducing measures such as face masks, classroom bubbles and reducing large gatherings where the headteacher feels there is a benefit. Only in extreme circumstances, and after discussion with public health experts, would pupils who are well be asked to stay off school for a short time. You and your child could also be asked to take daily tests by your school in the event of an outbreak.

Please support your school community with any necessary action and remember **Hands. Face. Space** is still highly effective in our daily lives.

Official scientific advice shows that the risk of serious illness to young people from Covid-19 remains low. What we do know is how damaging it is for our children to miss out on being at school, both for their learning and socialising.

Thank you for doing your bit. If you have any questions, please raise them with your teachers and let's all work together to keep our children safely in school.

Yours Sincerely

**Paul Wagstaff**

Director of Education & Skills