

Dear Parents/Carers

COVID-19 CASES IN SCHOOLS

The number of COVID cases in educational settings has increased nationally since the start of the autumn term and this is also true in the North West.

Throughout the pandemic Education and Public Health teams have worked closely with our schools to offer support and guidance around COVID prevention measures, and to provide advice on managing clusters and outbreaks. We feel this has been key to ensuring that safe, effective and proportionate steps are taken to enable our schools to remain open.

We know that being out of education can cause significant harm to educational attainment and subsequent life chances. It can also impact detrimentally on mental wellbeing and physical health. As we learn to live with the virus, we continue to balance the risk of infection and illness with minimising the disruption to children and young people's education.

Public Health teams have been using local data and intelligence to review cases, and the procedures in place to minimise transmission, and will continue to work with individual schools to consider and, if necessary, implement additional measures to manage cases and prevent further transmission. This could include the use of face coverings and enhanced testing. Any decisions will be made jointly between the local authority Education and Public Health teams, and affected schools.

Where additional measures are introduced to manage cases in specific settings these will be proportionate and time limited. Support of parents and students will be vital in ensuring that any additional measures are successfully implemented and adhered to in order for them to be effective.

Across all settings, regardless of current case numbers, in order to help to prevent and minimise the spread of the virus, we would ask that you support the following guidance:

1. Please do not allow your child to attend school or nursery if they are displaying any of the COVID symptoms, however mild (i.e. a new, continuous cough, high temperature and/or loss of taste or smell). They should stay home and arrange to have a PCR test.
2. Please continue to ensure all High School students take 'symptom-free' lateral flow (LFD) tests twice weekly, even if they are well. These tests are aimed at identifying those cases who do not have symptoms and who may therefore be spreading the virus unknowingly.
3. If anybody in your household tests positive for COVID, please ensure that:
 - The positive case self-isolates for 10 days from onset of symptoms or date of positive test if they have no symptoms
 - Everybody else in the household takes a PCR test as soon as possible

- Everybody else in the household takes a 'symptom-free' lateral flow (LFD) test daily, until the 10 day isolation period for the positive case has expired. If any of the daily tests are positive, the individual should self-isolate and book a PCR test.

We are hopeful that with everyone following the guidance in points 1 to 3 above, alongside the introduction of additional measures in those settings with active outbreaks or significant clusters, coupled with the vaccination programme rollout for 12-15 year olds, case numbers should start to reduce over coming weeks.

Unfortunately, COVID has not yet gone away and we must all continue to do what we can to limit the spread of the virus and support our schools. We will continue to keep the situation under review and update you if there are any further developments.

We would like to thank you in advance for your support.

Yours sincerely



Laurie Kwissa
Chief Executive Officer