

# Covid-19 update from the Education and Skills Team

Professional Advocates for Children in Education, Governor Support, NQTs, Early Years, the Virtual School for Looked after Children and In Year Fair Access

## Just like the old days

We will all be aware of the change in government guidance which comes into effect today (Tuesday). The whole array of guidance documents has been updated and are now skulking in an ominous queue to be read and summarised. We will work on this a little more for Thursday's bulletin. In the meantime, we have included the information from the Sunday email to headteachers and made a start on the rest.

The main change for schools today appears to be the face masks advice, but in Derby we were recommending this anyway. We have previously shared our graph to show the impact of mask wearing so we are pleased the DfE have come round to the same thinking.

Thank you to our local health team for speaking to governors at our free teatime topics session yesterday evening. It is very much appreciated that we have such a supportive relationship between the education and the health team in Derby. No doubt we will be learning more about Omicron in due course. Last night, the news was reporting 11 identified cases with the closest so far reported in Nottingham. The guidance on isolation of close contacts of Omicron has been provided in the information over the page – this requires 10 days regardless of vaccination status or age.

As ever, Derby leaders, teachers and support staff are on the front line of our work to keep the children of Derby safe along with their families. You continue to do a tremendous job, often at the expense of your own well-being. We will do our best to provide the support and advice you need.

Attached to the back of this bulletin and separately with the email are two letters from Dr Robyn Dewis with further advice for Heads and parents.

Thank you

Pauline, Jo and the E&S team

30 Nov 2021

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## Information for all education and childcare settings on new measures in response to the identification of the Omicron variant of COVID-19 in the UK

On Saturday 27 November, the Prime Minister [announced](#) new temporary measures following the emergence of the Omicron variant of COVID-19 in the UK.

The new measures will be introduced as a precaution to slow down the spread of the variant while we gather more information. We will continue to keep this under review as the situation develops.

### Face coverings

Face coverings should be worn in communal areas in all settings by staff, visitors and pupils or students in year 7 and above, unless they are exempt.

Pupils or students (in year 7 or above) should continue to wear face coverings on public and dedicated school transport unless they are exempt.

### Testing

All educational and childcare settings should continue to encourage staff and students to test twice weekly using lateral flow device (LFD) tests.

### Contact tracing and isolation

The [current guidance on contact tracing and isolation](#) remains in place. In addition to these, any suspected or confirmed close contacts of the Omicron variant will be asked to isolate for 10 days regardless of vaccination status or age. You will be contacted directly and told to isolate.

### Vaccination

All eligible staff and students aged 12 and over are encouraged to take up the offer of the vaccine, including boosters.

Vaccines are our best defence against COVID-19. They help protect young people and adults, and benefit those around them. Vaccination makes people less likely to catch the virus and less likely to pass it on.

To book a vaccination, please visit: [Book or manage a coronavirus \(COVID-19\) vaccination – NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](#).

## A huge ask for secondary schools again – January testing

The government have asked again for all secondary schools to prepare to test their pupils once back on-site in January after mixing with friends and family over Christmas. Tests, PPE and funding to support the school workforce will be provided as before. After this test on return, pupils should continue to test in line with government guidelines.

### The deadline to enable testing on return in January - by the end of today (Tuesday November 30<sup>th</sup>)!!!

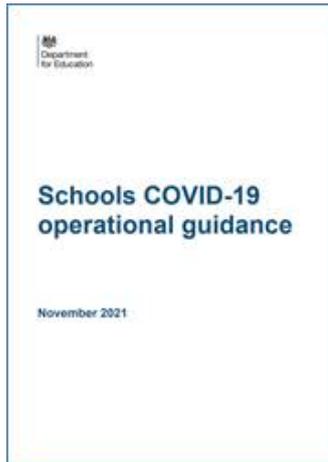
You are asked to check your test kit stock levels and make an order of test kits so that both staff and students are able to test over the holiday period if required, and for the first week of January, using home test kits. Secondary schools will also need to order ATS kits and sufficient home test kits to ensure secondary pupils can continue to test in line with government guidelines. Please complete this [stock-take form](#) and ensure your stock is in date. Please specify when your setting closes for the holidays in the 'delivery instructions' when placing your order to ensure you receive your delivery. Ofsted has confirmed that secondary schools will not be inspected, unless there are urgent concerns, during the first week of schools' return in January. Updated guidance is available on the [document sharing platform](#) to support you to prepare for asymptomatic testing when you return in January, including (for secondary schools) an asymptomatic testing site.

For those in settings closing over Christmas, all staff and students should test over the holidays in line with national guidance. This means that they should test if they will be in a high-risk situation that day, and before visiting people who are at higher risk of severe illness if they get COVID-19.

For settings remaining open over the Christmas period (such as private nurseries and HAF providers), staff and students should continue to test at home twice per week over the holiday period.

FE and HE students, and staff in all educational and childcare settings, should take one self-test at home either the evening or morning before they return in January. Then they should continue to test in line with government guidelines.

## Read all about it!



<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/actions-for-schools-during-the-coronavirus-outbreak>

Starting with this guidance document, which we imagine will be applicable to most of the others, there have been changes made in the following areas:

- Contact tracing and isolation - All individuals who have been identified as a close contact of a suspected or confirmed case of the Omicron variant, irrespective of vaccination status and age, will be contacted directly and required to self-isolate immediately and asked to book a PCR test. They will be informed by the local health protection team or NHS Test and Trace if they fall into this category and provided details about self-isolation. Further actions for educational settings may be advised by a local Incident Management Team (IMT) investigating a suspected or confirmed case of the Omicron variant of COVID-19.
- For everyone else, isolation rules are unchanged.
- All travelers arriving into the UK will need to isolate and get a PCR test by 'day two' after arrival. They may end their isolation once they receive a negative result. If the result is positive, they should continue to isolate and follow rules on isolation following a positive test. Unvaccinated arrivals aged over 18 will follow the existing, more onerous, testing and isolation regime. All Red list arrivals will enter quarantine. Parents travelling abroad should bear in mind the impact on their child's education which may result from any requirement to quarantine or isolate upon return.
- There is extensive information about face coverings. Where pupils in year 7 and above are in school, the DfE now recommend that face coverings should be worn by pupils, staff and adult visitors when moving around the premises, outside of classrooms, such as in corridors and communal areas. This is a temporary measure. Pupils in these schools should also wear a face covering when travelling on public transport and dedicated transport to and from school. DfE are not advising that pupils and staff wear face coverings in classrooms.
- In primary schools, DfE recommend that face coverings should be worn by staff and adults (including visitors) when moving around in corridors and communal areas. Health advice continues to be that children in primary schools should not be asked to wear face coverings. Face coverings do not need to be worn when outdoors.
- Schools, as employers, have a duty to comply with the Equality Act 2010 which includes making reasonable adjustments for disabled staff. They also have a duty to make reasonable adjustments for disabled pupils, to support them to access education successfully. No pupil should be denied education on the grounds that they are not wearing a face covering.
- There are sections on transparent face coverings, on circumstances where face coverings cannot be worn, on having supplies in schools (we are trying to help you with this in Derby) and how to put on and take off.
- Vaccinations – The DfE recommend all school staff and eligible pupils take up the offer of a vaccine.

[COVID-19 vaccination programme for children and young people: guidance for schools \(version 2\) - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-vaccination-programme-for-children-and-young-people-guidance-for-schools-version-2)



Derby City Council

Team Public Health  
Contact Robyn Dewis  
Our ref RD/NO

Date 29<sup>th</sup> November 2021

Dear Head Teachers,

Thank you for your continued support during this incredibly challenging time. We are entering another period of uncertainty and I wanted to take this opportunity to provide clarity on my previous advice from the 15<sup>th</sup> October. This advice is provided in response to the continuing high rates of COVID in the City and to continuing outbreaks within educational settings.

I wrote to you and to parents advising that children who were household contacts of positive cases should isolate whilst waiting for their PCR result; this advice is beyond current national guidance. I am able to provide this advice due to my statutory role as Director of Public Health, however I cannot require schools or parents to follow my advice. I am in continued communication with the Regional Schools Commissioner regarding this.

I am advising this approach as our current estimates are that around 40% of children who are household contacts will become positive. We know that around a third of positive cases do not have symptoms and so these children are at increased risk of attending school whilst positive. We have evidence of situations where siblings continue to attend school, their PCR is then positive, and the school has an increased number of cases following this exposure.

I have presented our analysis to colleagues in the Department of Education. Due to the high risk of infection in this group, when we ask children to isolate until the PCR result in this way, we lose fewer days of face-to-face education than if each child who is positive passes the infection to only one other child in school. Increasing PCR testing will also allow a more complete picture of variant spread, as it is PCR tests that undergo sequencing.

Today there is of course a new context to this advice. Individuals who are contacts of anyone infected with the new variant, Omicron, will be required to self-isolate as was previously required. It will take a few days for each positive sample to be tested further before we know whether it is the new variant and expect to see cases due to community spread in the coming weeks. To maintain face to face education in the run up to Christmas it is important that we reduce the risk of COVID as much as possible within the school setting.

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It is possible that national guidance will be amended over coming days. However, based on the above information I ask that you give the following advice to families, and have included a letter for circulation:

- If your child has symptoms of COVID please isolate them at home and arrange a PCR test in line with national guidance. A lateral flow test is not sufficient in this case.
- **If you have a positive COVID case in the household, please arrange for all other household members to have a PCR test and keep your child at home until a result is received. Please do not take them to other clubs or social events during this time.**
- If the PCR is positive please follow national advice and isolate- this is required by law.
- If the PCR is negative your child can return to school, but if they are able please consider daily lateral flow testing for seven more days.
- Please continue using lateral flow tests regularly as a family, including parents and Secondary School aged children. Lateral flow tests can also be used by younger children if you feel happy and able to do this.
- Any positive lateral flow test must be confirmed with a PCR test in line with national guidance. Variants such as Omicron can only be detected through a PCR test.

I have also reminded families that if their child has had a positive COVID test in the past 90 days they do not need to retest unless they develop new symptoms.

We have had some enquiries regarding Christmas fairs and performances. I would encourage you to revisit your plans, in particular considering your business continuity, as any contact of an Omicron case will need to isolate even if fully vaccinated. As always, if you conclude that you cannot hold such events safely then you have our full support.

Please continue to communicate with us through the CCT inbox, including any additional measures you feel you would like to take, and the team will continue to discuss additional measures with you in the event of an outbreak in your school. We will continue to monitor the situation in schools weekly and respond to the situation in the City.

Yours sincerely



Dr Robyn Dewis  
Director of Public Health



Derby City Council

Team      Public Health  
Contact    Robyn Dewis  
Our ref     RD/NO

Date            29<sup>th</sup> November 2021

Dear Parents and Carers,

Thank you for all that you are continuing to do to help us keep children in school. The months ahead are very uncertain with the discovery of the new COVID variant Omicron. In Derby I gave extra advice on 15<sup>th</sup> October to try to cut down COVID spread in schools. This advice is because of the high rates of COVID cases in the City and the outbreaks in schools.

I advised that children who lived with someone who was positive for COVID should stay at home and take a PCR test. PCR tests are the best test for COVID and the only way that we can identify variants like Omicron. This is extra advice on top of national guidance which I am able to provide due to my role as Director of Public Health, but this remains advice.

Around 2 out of 5 children who live with someone infected will become positive for COVID; and around 1 in 3 of these children will not have symptoms. These children are at risk of infecting their friends at school whilst waiting for their PCR result. We have seen some of these cases spreading infection to other year groups or schools recently.

If we have a case of Omicron in school the current national guidance is that all contacts, including school contacts, will need to isolate as before. It is really important that we do everything we can to prevent this happening and keep children in school, especially in these last few weeks before Christmas.

National guidance may change over the next days or weeks, in the mean time I advise:

- If your child has symptoms of COVID please isolate them at home and arrange a PCR test in line with national guidance. A lateral flow test is not sufficient in this case.
- **If you have a positive COVID case in the household please arrange for all other household members to have a PCR test and keep your child at home until a result is received. Please do not take them to other clubs or social events during this time.**
- If the PCR is positive please follow national advice and isolate- this is required by law.
- If the PCR is negative your child can return to school, but if they are able please consider daily lateral flow testing for seven more days.

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- Please continue using lateral flow tests regularly as a family, including parents and Secondary School aged children. Lateral flow tests can also be used by younger children if you feel happy and able to do this.
- Any positive lateral flow test must be confirmed with a PCR test in line with national guidance. Variants such as Omicron can only be detected through a PCR test.

If your child has special educational needs and testing is not possible please discuss this with your school. Current advice is that any child who has received a positive PCR test does not need to test again, unless they develop new symptoms, for 90 days as they should have a good level of protection against the virus.

Everyone over the age of 12 years is able to receive COVID vaccination. If you or members of your family have not yet had this please go to [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) vaccines - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](https://www.nhs.uk) or call 119 for more information.

We are continuing to watch and respond to the situation in the City and are grateful for your continued support.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Robyn Dewis', written in a cursive style.

Dr Robyn Dewis  
Director of Public Health