

Dear Parents and Carers,

We are pleased to report that since your children returned to school in March, Covid-19 case numbers in schools have remained low, meaning the majority of children and young people have been able to remain in school.

The safety and wellbeing of Worcestershire's children, young people, families and staff has remained our highest priority and we continue to work with schools to review the measures they have put in place and enable pupils to get the most out of their school experience.

You will have seen the national announcements and revisions in arrangements from the 17th May. There has been very little change to the national schools' guidance ahead of next week, however we thought it would be helpful if we wrote to you to highlight the continued expectations in relation to Covid-19 on school sites.

We must continue to remain vigilant, particularly in light of new and emerging variants. This will help us keep children and young people in schools for the remainder of the Summer Term.

Face Coverings in Secondary Schools

The most significant change to the national schools' guidance is that from the 17th May face coverings will no longer be recommended for pupils in classrooms or communal areas. Face coverings will also no longer be recommended for staff in classrooms. In all schools the guidance continues to recommend that face coverings should be worn by staff and visitors in situations outside of classrooms where social distancing is not possible (for example, when moving around in corridors and communal areas). The guidance also states that the reintroduction of face coverings for pupils, students or staff may be advised for a temporary period in response to particular localised outbreaks, including variants of concern. We welcome your continued support in relation to this.

Despite the national position we continue to be concerned about the ability to socially distance in classrooms, and communal areas, and the threat of Covid-19 variants with increased

transmission rates. Therefore, we will support schools who wish to encourage secondary age pupils and staff to continue to wear face coverings where possible, and we will review this further at the half term break based on infection levels and further information in relation to variants.

The requirement to wear a face covering on public transport and dedicated home to school transport remains unchanged and is mandatory for children aged 11 and over unless exempt.

There is no national or local recommendation that children in primary schools wear a face covering within the setting.

Lateral Flow testing (LFT)

It continues to be the national and local expectation that secondary age pupils will take a LFT twice a week, and we urge you to ensure your secondary-age child is tested. LFT continues to be an important tool in managing infection rates and reducing transmission on an ongoing basis. It regularly identifies cases of people who are not experiencing symptoms, and therefore reduces transmission and the number of children and young people that may need to isolate.

There is no national recommendation for primary-age pupils to have a LFT. You will be aware, however, that we have extended our LFT Community sites to be able to test children and young people from age 2, and we highly recommend that you do this. You will also be aware that home test kits can be collected from local collection points to be used. Further information is available on LFT Community sites, and accessing home test kits at:

https://www.worcestershire.gov.uk/info/20870/coronavirus_covid-19_symptoms_and_how_to_get_a_test/2344/coronavirus_covid-19_i_do_not_have_symptoms

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/rapid-lateral-flow-testing-for-households-and-bubbles-of-school-pupils-and-staff>

Other arrangements

There is little other change to the national schools' guidance ahead of next week, and we are not expecting further changes until the 21st June. Schools will therefore be continuing with their system of controls to manage infection rates such as staggered start and finish times, one-way systems and expectation that parents remain socially distanced and wear face coverings on site. Schools will also be continuing to arrange children and young people in groups / bubbles, and managing parents' interactions and pupil transition virtually where possible.

We will continue to review the position in line with the national guidance and local infection rates including variants to prevent any spikes in infection rates prior to the Summer holidays. We are hopeful that schools will be able to resume more normal arrangements from September. We will obviously write to you again ahead of the 21st June to confirm the position.

General controls

As a parent, carer or guardian you can continue to support your school by ensuring you continue to adhere to the following public health guidance:

- Keep 2 metres apart when dropping off and collecting children from school. Where it is physically difficult to socially distance it is recommended that face coverings should be worn.
- If you or your child has any of the three following symptoms, however mild, you should keep your child off school and book a test:
 - a high temperature;
 - a new, continuous cough;
 - loss or change to your sense of smell or taste.
- If anyone in your household develops COVID-19 symptoms all of the household must self-isolate until a test result is received. Please inform your school immediately about test results.
- If you or your child are required to self-isolate you must not leave your home, not even for a daily walk. If you need support whilst isolating you can contact our Here 2 Help service at: www.worcestershire.gov.uk/here2help
- Reinforcing with your children how to wash hands, make space and minimise contact

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

Many thanks for your continued support in helping keep COVID-19 rates down in Worcestershire and helping schools to be as safe as possible.

Yours sincerely,



Tina Russell
Interim Director of Children's Services



Dr Kathryn Cobain
Director of Public Health