



1<sup>st</sup> September 2021

Dear Parent/Guardian/Carer,

We are looking forward to welcoming pupils back for the new school year in the hope that we may have a more straightforward year ahead. As we re-open this autumn term, it is imperative that we continue to do all we can to balance keeping pupils and staff as safe as possible, whilst reducing disruption to the education of our young people. Over the summer, there has been new guidance as part of the government's response to the pandemic. We have moved away from stringent restrictions, towards offering advice to people on how to protect themselves and others, supported by the national vaccination programme.

Public Health England assures us that the risk of transmission of Coronavirus in education settings and the risk of severe illness in children and young people is low. We also know that there are significant harms associated with missed education. This is why it's so important we work together to keep our schools as safe as possible, acknowledging we are all learning to live with the virus. It is a local and national priority that we deliver face-to-face, high-quality education to all pupils, something we steadfastly support. The evidence is clear that being out of education has an impact on educational attainment, life chances, and mental and physical health.

#### **Omega MAT's approach:**

The vaccine rollout has been a success in the region, with large numbers of staff taking up the vaccine. Alongside this in September and following Government guidance, we will also ensure the following safety measures are in place:

- Continuing the good hygiene practices we have all been following these past months
- Maintaining appropriate building cleaning regimes
- Keeping occupied spaces well ventilated
- Following public health advice on testing, self-isolation and management of confirmed cases

There is no longer a requirement for 'bubbles' or the need for schools and colleges to contact trace, although they could be reintroduced if cases rise. Equally, the government has removed the requirement to wear face coverings in law; however, they are still recommended in enclosed and crowded spaces for staff and secondary students, where there may be contact with people you don't normally meet to limit transmission. We support anyone who wishes to continue to wear face coverings either in classrooms or in communal areas. They remain essential for public transport and dedicated transport to school.

#### **Contingency planning**

Our contingency plans or 'Outbreak Management Plan' outlines what we will do when pupils or staff test positive and how we will operate if advised to take extra measures to help break chains of transmission. Any additional measures we may decide to bring in, would only be considered as a last resort and restricted to the individual group or school for the shortest amount of time possible.

We will continue to work closely with our local public health and Local Authority education teams to ensure they are fully briefed on local and national policy and advice.



**Self-isolation:** this will still be required if you test positive for the virus, but now without the need for all classmates to isolate. Importantly, if you are displaying any COVID-19 symptoms, however mild, you should remain at home and seek a PCR test. It's important to use lateral flow tests routinely – twice a week – in case you have the virus but do not display any symptoms. About 1 in 3 people with COVID-19 do not have symptoms, so the continued use of LFTs are strongly recommended for staff in all settings and students in high schools. Contact tracing is now done by the NHS. Close contacts to someone testing positive will be advised to get a PCR test, unless they have had a positive PCR test in the previous 90 days. Regardless of age or vaccination status, anyone who develops any of the three main COVID-19 symptoms (see below) must get a PCR test as soon as possible and isolate until the result is available. People who get a positive PCR test must continue to isolate as before.

### **What you can do to help?**

**Lateral Flow Tests:** secondary school students should take two lateral flow tests, spaced three to five days apart, before they return. This will help us to ensure that the return is as safe and smooth as possible for everyone. Schools will send out details about their testing programme, with general information on symptom-free testing.

**Vaccination:** the government is clear that one of the targeted interventions to reduce risk is to offer every person 16 years or older a first vaccine and the opportunity for two doses by mid-September. Everyone who is eligible for the vaccination and is offered it, is advised to take up the offer.

We recognise how difficult the past 18 months has been and the sacrifices that families have had to make; it has been a very challenging time for us all and we hope the information we provide brings some clarity for you. Please find attached a basic Frequently Asked Questions sheet to assist you, should you or your child feel unwell and/or test positive, which I hope is helpful.

Should you have any concerns or with all the changes feel unclear about how you should respond, please do not hesitate to contact your school office. Once again, I would like to thank you for your patience, support and cooperation in helping us manage a successful return to school for all pupils.

I wish you and your family a safe, happy and successful new term.

Yours sincerely,



Jon Wright,  
Chief Executive Officer,  
Omega Multi-Academy Trust.

## **Frequently Asked Questions**

The DfE has some resources to help reassure parents about the return to school, which includes:

- A blog on [what pupils and their families can expect when they return to school and college this September](#). This answers some common questions and explains some of the changes this term.
- [Parent FAQ leaflets](#) for early years, primary, secondary and FE settings to share with parents and answer any questions about the return.
- Guidance on GOV.UK explaining [what parents and carers need to know about attending schools and colleges in 2021](#).
- Additionally, don't forget about the website for parents listing the extra [support available to help any pupils catch up](#) on lost learning or boost their wellbeing.

### **What should I do if my child develops COVID-19 symptoms?**

The main symptoms of COVID-19 are:

- new continuous cough and/or
- fever (temperature of 37.8°C or higher)
- loss of or change in, normal sense of taste or smell (anosmia)

If your child develops any of these symptoms, you must arrange for them to have a PCR test as soon as possible. A PCR test can be arranged via the NHS UK ([www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)) website or by contacting NHS 119 via telephone if you do not have internet access.

Your child should self-isolate immediately and they should not attend school.

Please contact the school by phone to inform them that your child has COVID-19 symptoms and you are awaiting a COVID-19 test.

### **What should I do if my child has COVID-19 confirmed by PCR test?**

Anyone with COVID-19 confirmed by PCR test should self-isolate until the latest of:

- 10 days after the onset of their symptoms, or
- 10 days after their test day if they are asymptomatic

Self-isolation means your child should not go to school, attend any out of school activities or visit a friend's house. They should not visit any public places, use public transport or go out to exercise. You should not have visitors into the home except for those providing essential care.

Please contact the school by phone and inform them your child has COVID-19 confirmed by PCR test. It is really important you let the school know if your child has confirmed COVID-19 so they can monitor the number of children with COVID-19 across the school.

### **What should I do if my child is a contact of someone with COVID-19 confirmed by PCR test?**

If your child is aged under 18 years and 6 months and does not have any symptoms of COVID-19 (high temperature, new continuous cough, loss of or change in, normal sense of taste or smell) they do not have to self-isolate as a contact of COVID-19. They are advised to have a PCR test unless they have had a positive PCR test in the last 90 days. Children aged 5 and under are not advised to take a PCR test unless the confirmed case is someone in their own household.

### **What should I do if my child has a positive result on a Lateral Flow Device Test?**

If your child has a positive result on a lateral flow device test, they should self-isolate immediately and you should arrange a PCR test as soon as possible.

Other members of the household do not need to self-isolate whilst you await the PCR test result if they do not have symptoms and are aged under 18 years and 6 months or are fully vaccinated.

### **What should I do if my child is unwell with signs of an infection but does not have symptoms?**

Your child should not attend school if they are unwell. If concerned you should seek advice from your GP or Pharmacist, they will be able to advise you how long your child should stay off school. Otherwise we would recommend not attending school for 48 hours or until the child is symptom free, whichever is longer. We are not currently advising that preschool children get a PCR test if they do not have the three main symptoms of COVID-19.