

Date 17 June 2021

Dear Parents and Carers

This letter provides some new guidance to parents, carers, children and schools, reflecting the change in the Government's roadmap to ease COVID restrictions. It covers school arrangements for:

- PCR testing of asymptomatic close contacts
- the use of face coverings in secondary schools
- primary school taster/transition days within secondary schools

It remains our priority to minimise the disruption to learning for children and young people.

Whilst East Sussex has one of the lowest rates of COVID in the country, it is experiencing an increase in cases in line with the national trend. The new 'Delta' variant is now the most common in England and there are an increasing number of cases in schools and educational settings. It is more transmissible than previous variants and we are starting to see a number of local outbreaks in Sussex.

As with all phases of the pandemic, the most effective methods for reducing transmission in and out of school are:

- handwashing
- social distancing
- the use of face coverings

Twice weekly testing at home is also an important part of keeping infection rates low and secondary schools are seeing a fall in the number of home tests being reported to the NHS. We are, therefore, encouraging staff, pupils in secondary schools and their families to continue to test twice weekly at home. Please note that testing is vital if you display symptoms, as too is [social isolation](#) for the case and their contacts.

It is sensible to consider what additional measures can be introduced to help keep the number of infections low during the last part of the school year. We would, therefore, draw your attention to the following points.

PCR Testing

As an extra precaution, the Government have recently updated [advice](#) to recommend that, in addition to isolation, all contacts of a confirmed case take a PCR test, even when they have no symptoms. This offer extends to close contacts of cases in early years settings.

There is no lower age limit. However, if the parent/guardians do not want to test very young children when they are without symptoms, it is recommended that the adult carer/s of the contact test themselves as an alternative.

Please note: Anyone who is symptomatic, whatever age, should get a PCR test.

Face Coverings

The Government changed their advice about the use of face coverings by pupils in secondary schools and these came into effect after the half term break. However, given the emerging situation regarding the new 'Delta' variant and the increasing cases in local schools, we support secondary schools with the reinstatement of the wearing of face coverings in communal areas from Monday 21st June until the end of term. We will continue to monitor infection rates in schools and may need to consider a return to face coverings in classrooms as well should we see a significant rise in numbers.

Primary Taster/Transition Sessions within Secondary Schools

As you will know, secondary schools have been planning taster sessions for their feeder primary school pupils during July. The government have issued guidance to schools advising them to complete a thorough risk assessment before running taster days. Unfortunately, this means that traditional transitional and open days are unlikely to go ahead this academic year in most cases. We have, therefore, advised schools to consider moving these events online in order to reduce the potential for transmission. Transition days for Year 6 can go ahead if they are organised in a way that maintains Covid controls and avoids social mixing between pupils from different schools. We are also encouraging schools to arrange individual visits for vulnerable children where this is possible, including those with a special educational need or disability (SEND).

Primary schools and post-16 colleges are also advised to complete a thorough risk assessment for their taster days and transition activities this term.

We understand that this is not ideal and is a change from the normal transition activities at this time of year. However, as we're sure you will appreciate, we want to support school leaders to do everything they can to provide a COVID safe environment.

Thank you to you and your families for your support and understanding at what we know is still a challenging time.

Yours sincerely



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Director of Children's Services



Darrell Gale FFPH
Director of Public Health