



Letter to Parents and Carers from Trudi Grant, the Director of Public Health for Somerset and Julian Wooster, Director of Children's Services, Somerset County Council

Dear Parents/Carers

As we go through another period of national restrictions, we would like to thank you on behalf of our County for all for the hard work and sacrifices you have made this year to help keep Somerset safe. We know it has not been easy and many of you have had to make significant changes to the way you live your lives. We are very grateful for your continued adherence to the guidance.

It is vital to have children and young people back in education. School is the best place for children and young people to be. The new national restrictions have kept schools open and made it permissible to leave your home to travel to and from school.

Somerset's infection rate is still below the rest of the country, but case numbers have increased. We want to assure you that staff and public health are working quickly to identify close contacts and take the necessary actions. We are grateful to those who have had to undertake periods of self-isolation – your actions have really helped to keep the rates of coronavirus low.

We know we are likely to see more cases in schools and education settings and want to make sure we can keep as many children and young people in face to face education for as long as possible. To achieve this, it is really important that we all continue to follow the guidance and do what we can to avoid the high levels of cases seen in other parts of the country. This will reduce the potential disruption to education.

With that in mind please follow these guidelines:

- Everyone must adhere to local and national restrictions that are in place. If these are restrictions are breached, schools may need to make a judgement about whether this has created a level of unacceptable risk to other pupils and staff and act accordingly.

- **Face coverings** should now be worn by adults and pupils outside of classrooms and when moving **around the premises** in secondary schools or middle schools for Year 7 and above (though middle schools may apply to this to all year groups). Additionally, the guidance relating to travel on dedicated **school transport** has changed and now, unless exempt, face coverings should also be worn by all pupils in year 7 and above. Please be sensitive to those pupils who are exempt and cannot wear a face covering.
- Children whose doctors have confirmed they are still **clinically extremely vulnerable** are advised **not to attend** childcare or nursery during the period of national restriction (until 2 December). If a member of the household is clinically extremely vulnerable, children **should still attend** school.
- You should **only** book a test if your child has any of these three coronavirus symptoms – runny nose or other cold-like symptoms are not included:
 1. **High temperature:** any new high temperature where child feels hot to touch on their chest or back.
 2. **New continuous cough:** coughing a lot for more than an hour, or three or more coughing episodes in 24 hours.
 3. **Loss of, or change in, sense of smell or taste**
- **You do not need** to get a test for anyone else in the household unless they also have any of the three symptoms listed above. **However, all members of the household need to self-isolate whilst waiting for that test result, even if they were not tested.**
- If your child or anybody else's test is positive, other members of the household must continue self-isolating for 14 days and **only get a test if they develop coronavirus symptoms.**
- If a pupil in a class or bubble tests positive for coronavirus we will work with the school to identify contacts. Anyone who is advised to self-isolate **does not require a test unless they subsequently develop symptoms. You do not need to self-isolate unless you are told to do so.**
- **If you or your child are asked to self-isolate, please ensure you comply and stay home for the full 14 days.** This is because it can take several days following contact with an infected person before an individual develops symptoms or the virus can be detected.

- If a child legally cannot travel to and/or attend school, they are **entitled to remote education and will not be marked absent**. If they can attend school and do not, the school is not obliged to provide remote education and the child will be marked absent. The same **expectations about attending school regularly** apply and the same consequences for non-attendance, however, sensitivity and judgement will be used, and every case looked at individually.

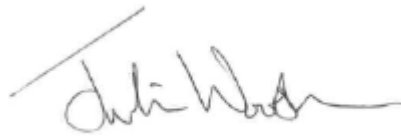
Please find attached our helpful Covid Checker for testing and School Self-Isolation Guidance document.

We know this has been a difficult year for our communities across Somerset and thank you all once again for your support and understanding during this time. We really appreciate it.

With thanks and best wishes



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Director Childrens Services