

Dear Parent/Carer,

Thank you, for all that you have done so far this term to prevent the transmission of COVID-19 in school. You will be aware that rates of COVID-19 are high across the County and several of our schools have seen outbreaks. However, COVID-19 is not the only challenge that schools face this winter. Outbreaks of other infectious diseases, such as Norovirus, have already been reported and have the potential to impact on your child's school. We are suggesting key steps that can be taken this winter to protect you and your family against common winter infections and ultimately help to keep your child's school open and your child in education.

Handwashing

One of the most effective steps against all infectious diseases is handwashing. Although hand sanitizer has its place and is largely effective against COVID-19 it is less effective against other illnesses such as Norovirus. Therefore, I would like to stress to you the benefit of implementing good handwashing practices at home.

- Encourage your children to wash their hands before and after school and regularly throughout the day.
- It is important to wash hands for at least 20 seconds, using soap and water, then dry thoroughly.

COVID-19

There have been some recent changes to the guidance of how outbreaks of COVID-19 are managed in schools (**Contingency framework: education and childcare settings - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)**). You may notice some differences if your child's school experiences an outbreak. The key differences are:

- Additional testing
 - If there are several reported cases of COVID-19 in your child's school your child may be asked to do a PCR test.
 - For year 7 and above, your child may be asked to do a one-off Lateral Flow Test (LFT) or daily LFTs.
 - If you have a COVID-19 case at home or your child has been notified that they are a contact of a case of COVID-19 by NHS test and Trace, they should get a PCR test and do daily LFTs until their PCR test result is returned.
- Individuals previously identified as CEV are advised to continue to follow the guidance: **Coronavirus: how to stay safe and help prevent the spread - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)**. Individuals should consider advice from their health professional on whether additional precautions are right for them.

These measures have been suggested as part of the guidance to reduce the impact of an outbreak of COVID-19.

Norovirus

Norovirus, also known as the "Winter Vomiting Bug" is a virus that often circulates in winter and causes diarrhoea and vomiting. To reduce the impact of Norovirus on your school please:

- Ensure that after having diarrhoea and/or vomiting your child does not return to school until a minimum of 48 hours of being symptom free.

- Promote handwashing in your household, with soap and water and good **hand drying**. Wet, washed hands spread germs.
- Remember that hand gels don't work against Norovirus infection.

Influenza

Influenza(Flu) is likely to be circulating amongst other respiratory infections this winter. Things to consider, to limit the spread are:

- All children aged 2-16 are eligible for the nasal spray flu vaccine.
- Children who test negative for COVID-19 should not come back to school until they are at least 24 hours clear of a fever and are feeling well enough to return to school.
- Share clear respiratory hygiene measures with children "Catch it, Bin it, Kill it."

All parents and carers are encouraged to download the "Handi Paediatric App" this is a free app which has been designed by health professionals and allows you access to expert advice on how to manage common childhood illnesses. More information can be found here:

[Herefordshire and Worcestershire ccg - HANDi Paediatric app \(Worcestershire\)](#)

Thank you again for all that you have been doing and we really do wish you well as we enter the winter months where, we do traditionally see more circulating infections. If you would like any further information on Norovirus or Influenza please visit:

[Norovirus \(vomiting bug\) - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](#)

[Flu - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](#)

Kind Regards,



Dr Kathryn Cobain

**Director of Public Health
Worcestershire County Council**



Sarah Wilkins

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