



Date: 26 October 2021

Dear Parent/Carer,

In the weeks leading up to half term, we have seen large increases in the number of children and young people testing positive for COVID-19. Several of our schools have seen outbreaks that have disrupted education. We have also seen children catching COVID-19 in schools and passing it on to their families and friends. This is very different from the situation last year, when we were seeing transmission in communities but very little in schools.

Locally, the number of admissions to hospital has increased and our rates of infection in people over 60, who are more vulnerable to severe illness, remain high. Even if adults are not ill enough to need hospital care, many are absent from work because they have caught COVID-19 from their children, or because they need to care for unwell children. Staff absence is putting severe pressure on local NHS and social care services and risks affecting their ability to care for people with COVID-19 and other illnesses.

We are advising all schools in Doncaster to consider implementing the following additional measures when they return following the half term break. We are also providing some information on how you and your family can take steps to prevent common winter infections.

COVID-19

There have been some recent changes in the [guidance](#) on managing outbreaks of COVID-19 in schools. You may notice some differences if your child's school experiences an outbreak. This may include your child may be asked to do a PCR test if there are a high number of cases in the school and children in year 7 and above may be asked to do a one-off Lateral Flow Test (LFT) or daily LFTs for up to 7 days.

We are also making a local recommendation in situations where there is a **positive COVID-19 case in your household**, children should stay at home. The steps are described in the box below.

There is a higher risk of a child testing positive if a person in their household has tested positive. If there is a **positive person (e.g. Parent or sibling) in your household** we are recommending that your child or children stay at home:

- If your child has symptoms or develops symptoms on day 1 or 2, they should get a PCR test straight away
- If they don't have symptoms, they should get a PCR test **on day 3, 4 or 5** after their household member started with symptoms (or took their test if they had no symptoms)
- If this test is negative, the child can return to school and complete LFT tests for the remaining isolation period of the household contact
- If the child develops symptoms at a later date, they must stay home and PCR test again

This applies to primary and secondary age children. [PCR test kits](#) and [LFT test kits](#) can be

ordered online. Any pupil who has tested positive for COVID-19 via a PCR test within the past 90 days, and 12–16-year-olds who have had at least one dose of the vaccine more than 14 days ago, will be exempt from this.

Parents and carers who still want their child to continue to attend school have the right for them to do so. We hope that most parents will understand the reasons behind the request and will feel able to support the school. If a parent is not able to support the school in this request, we would still strongly advise that their child obtains a PCR test before returning to school.

As we are heading into winter and as rates across Doncaster are high, schools may recommend additional measures on site. These may include:

- **Use of face coverings** when moving around the school site for secondary age and post-16 education settings. Face coverings should continue to be used on school transport.
- **Reducing mixing between groups** to reduce the risk of transmission of COVID-19. This may mean fewer group assemblies or changes to after school clubs.
- **Limiting visitors to the school**, including events that bring visitors or parents into the school. Your child's school will assess whether events can be managed safely on site or should take place online.
- Additional steps may be taken to improve the COVID-19 security for any **planned residential educational visits**

On top of the measures that schools are taking, there are some measures you can continue to support your school with:

- Continue to support your child to undertake lateral flow testing twice a week if they attend a secondary school
- Support your child to wear a face covering if they attend secondary school, both in school and in enclosed indoor spaces in public.
- Consider the benefits of the vaccination programme for children between the age of 12 and 15. You should receive information from your school very shortly if you have not already done so.
- If you or your child develop symptoms of COVID-19 you should book a free NHS test as soon as possible. You can also phone 119. Stay at home until it is time to take your test.

Children and young people who have previously been identified as **Clinically Extremely Vulnerable (CEV)** are advised to continue to follow the guidance on how to stay safe and help prevent the spread of COVID-19. Individuals should consider advice from their health professional on whether additional precautions are right for them. [Coronavirus: how to stay safe and help prevent the spread - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/guidance/coronavirus-how-to-stay-safe-and-help-prevent-the-spread).

We understand the above will be frustrating to some of you, and welcome to others. We all want our children in school and having as full an educational experience as possible. However, we believe that the best way of achieving this is to recommend simple measures that will bring down the number of cases in school, and reduce the pressure on our health and social care services.

Doncaster Council

Civic Office, Waterdale DN1 3BU

We will review this advice to schools at the end of November when we hope that the vaccine offer for 12-15 year olds, and the booster programme for vulnerable adults, will be more advanced. Further advice will be based on the rate of infection in schools along with the pressure on Health services at that time.

Norovirus

Norovirus, also known as the Winter Vomiting Bug is a virus that often circulates in winter and causes diarrhoea and vomiting.

- Promote handwashing at home and when arriving home from school with soap and water and good **hand drying**. Wet, washed hands spread germs.
- Remember that hand sanitiser is resistant to Norovirus infection
- If your child has an episode of diarrhoea and/ or vomiting they should not return to school until they are 2 days (48 hours) free of any symptoms.

Influenza

Influenza (Flu) is likely to be circulating along with other respiratory infections this winter.

- All children aged 2-16 are eligible for the nasal spray flu vaccine, your child may receive this at school so look out for consent forms
- 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.
- Ensure your child has tissues and knows how to “Catch it, Bin it, Kill it”

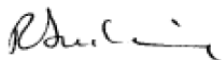
Thank you again for all that you have been doing and we really do wish you well as we enter the winter months where, we do traditionally see more circulating infections. If you would like any further information on Norovirus or Influenza please visit:

[Norovirus \(vomiting bug\) - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](http://www.nhs.uk)

[Flu - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](http://www.nhs.uk)

Finally, we would like to thank you for everything you've done to keep your family and community safe, and for your patience in supporting schools at this challenging time.

Kind regards,



Dr Rupert Suckling
Director of Public Health



Riana Nelson
Director of Learning, Opportunities and
Skills, Learning and Opportunities