

15<sup>th</sup> March 2021

Dear Parents / Carers,

### **Key Messages from Public Health – Preventing the Spread of COVID-19**

We really wish to welcome our children back into school for those young people who have been working from home. Our schools and early years settings are continuing to work hard to maintain provision for your children, but we know that you may be receiving a great deal of information about Coronavirus and maybe feeling exhausted and concerned by the ongoing pandemic.

We have come so far together and if we continue to support each other to follow guidance and stay safe we will have a better chance of controlling the virus and keeping well.

#### Key Messages

Public health would like to share some key messages and actions with the school community to prevent community spread of the virus:

- Ensure that you wear **face coverings** when dropping off and collecting children, maintaining distancing on the way in and way out of school. We have had reports across the county of lapses in social distancing and use of face coverings, it is important that we maintain social distancing and wear our face coverings over our nose and mouth.
- Families are invited to get on board with the national programme for testing of families with primary school and secondary school children to help tackle community transmission without symptoms.

Please take this opportunity to order home Lateral Flow Devices (LFD) which are plastic cartridge home test kits, they can be used twice a week (3-5 days apart) and reordered weekly. These can be collected locally (main collection sites are PCR walk in centres from 1-8pm daily), you can find your nearest collection site here: <https://find-covid-19-rapid-test-sites.maps.test-and-trace.nhs.uk>, and further collection slots will be brought in. If the walk-in centres are not close to you, you can have these delivered to your home by royal mail, usually within 24hrs. These can be found from this website.

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/rapid-lateral-flow-testing-for-households-and-bubbles-of-school-pupils-and-staff>

- Home testing will be especially key for all families with a child isolating, it would be beneficial for everyone in the household to undertake the above testing twice weekly.
- Please note, that while COVID-19 usually presents with a new or worsening cough, high temperature and loss or change in taste or smell. COVID-19 can present as cold symptoms such as; sore throat, severe fatigue/ feeling unwell for no clear reason, poorly tummy, severe headache and muscle aches. If your child is unwell with these lesser symptoms, please keep your child off school while they are unwell (this was national guidance before COVID-19).



Where there have been COVID-19 cases in the school or community, we would also ask that your child obtains a PCR test whilst recovering to ensure that it is not COVID-19. Your household does not need to isolate whilst this is undertaken (you can book online or with 119 by stating you do not have the top three symptoms online but “Public Health has requested you book a test”, you **are** permitted to have a test without symptoms, the household legally does not need to isolate).

- Looking out for these lesser symptoms is especially important for those with a child/ren self isolating, if your child or members of your household become unwell in the isolation period, although it may be a seasonal cold, please consider this could be COVID-19. Your child can PCR test whilst they are isolating, those self-isolating should not attend community Lateral Flow Test (LFT) centres. We would also prefer PCR than home test kits as PCR is more accurate when there are some signs of illness. Book as described above.
- Those who have been self isolating should home-LFD test or test at a Community LFT Centre on the day after isolation (day 11). This will ensure that children are not carrying the virus without symptoms on the day they are to return to school. We recommend you book your tests in advance.
- All LFD tests are better taken first thing in the morning (as early as possible – but not the night before), notifying the school immediately allows the school time to self-isolate any close contacts before they leave for school and allows you time to book a PCR test in as quickly as possible if this is positive.
- **ALL positive at-home LFD tests require registering online and any positive results require a confirmatory PCR test on the same day as the positive LFD.** Following a positive result, the household should self isolate. The person who tested positive should have a PCR test and only if it is negative can they and the household stop isolating immediately. ***If you are planning on using a walk-in test centre for your confirmatory PCR test – please note these now close for appointments at 12pm (last test 11.30am). Please book your PCR test as soon as you have a positive LFD to ensure a same day PCR test.***

**Note: Those that have tested positive for Coronavirus by PCR are exempt from a further PCR or LFT/D test for 90 days, unless they develop new symptoms.**

This does not change the national guidance that, if you are unwell with a cough, high temperature or a loss or change in taste or smell, you and your household must self-isolate for 10 days from the date of first symptoms unless there is a negative PCR test result.

We understand that this new information may be challenging to put in place, but we believe it is necessary to ensure that we can maintain education provision for your child(ren). We want to keep you, your families, your setting, as well as your local community safe.

Yours sincerely,

Liann Brookes-Smith

Public Health, Warwickshire County Council