



Children's Services

Sharon Hubber,
Director

Children's Services

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Dear parents and carers,

As we prepare for the return to children and young people to schools, colleges and other education settings, we wanted to thank you for your continued support for our education settings across the borough as they continue to respond to the challenges of COVID-19. We also wanted to share with you some of the key messages that will support and help our schools and colleges to deliver education safely and help keep them open. Our school and college leaders want nothing more than to deliver face-face education as this is the best way for children and young people to learn and they continue to have to balance this against the health risks brought by COVID-19.

You will be aware from the media, that omicron is transmitting rapidly. This may already have had an impact on you and your families as it will for our schools and education settings and their staff. We are asking for your continued support with the following;

- **If someone has COVID-19 symptoms? Stay at home, isolate and take a PCR test.** You can book a test at <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-getting-tested-or-by-calling-119>.
- **From 14 December 2021, adults who are fully vaccinated and all children and young people aged between 5 and 18 years and 6 months identified as a contact of someone with COVID-19 are strongly advised to take a LFD test every day for 7 days and continue to attend their setting as normal,** unless they have a positive test result. Daily testing of close contacts applies to all contacts who are:
 - fully vaccinated adults – people who have had 2 doses of an approved vaccine
 - all children and young people aged 5 to 18 years and 6 months, regardless of their vaccination status
 - people who are not able to get vaccinated for medical reasons
 - people taking part, or have taken part, in an approved clinical trial for a COVID-19 vaccine
 - Children under 5 years are exempt from self-isolation and do not need to take part in daily testing of close contacts
- **From January 4th, we also recommend that in those schools where pupils in year 7 and above are educated, face coverings should be worn in classrooms.** This does not apply in situations where wearing a face covering would impact on the ability to take part in exercise or strenuous

activity, for example in PE lessons. This will also be a temporary measure. Pupils in these schools must also wear a face covering when travelling on public transport and should wear it on dedicated transport to and from school.

- **No symptoms? Take regular lateral flow tests.** Many people who become infected with the virus don't have symptoms but can still infect others. Test at least twice a week and before spending time in crowded and enclosed spaces, or before visiting people who are at higher risk of severe illness if they get COVID-19. Report your result at <https://www.gov.uk/report-covid19-result> and if positive, self-isolate immediately and take a PCR test. People can collect LFD tests from many places in Rochdale as well as having them delivered to their house. Please follow this link to see where you can obtain a test <http://www.rochdale.gov.uk/health-and-wellbeing/coronavirus/Pages/test-and-trace.aspx> or order tests for home delivery here: <https://www.gov.uk/order-coronavirus-rapid-lateral-flow-tests> . If an LFD Test result is positive, the person must isolate for 10 days and should take a confirmatory PCR test which can be booked via <https://www.gov.uk/get-coronavirus-test> or by calling 119.
- **For this term we are asking all pupils, their households and staff to take a lateral flow test on the morning or evening before returning to school after the holidays.** This is voluntary and we hope people will take part. Children aged 5-12 should be tested by an adult if parents/carers are happy to do so. Children aged under 5 do not need to be tested. You will also be aware of the need for secondary schools to deliver on site testing again on the return to school, please support your schools and/or education setting to ensure as many students as possible participate in regular testing.
- **Asymptomatic testing** remains important in reducing the risk of transmission of infection within schools. Staff and secondary school pupils should continue to test twice weekly at home, with lateral flow device (LFD) test kits, 3-4 days apart. Testing remains voluntary but is strongly encouraged. Our schools are strongly encouraged to ask parents and other visitors to take a lateral flow device (LFD) test before entering the school.
- **We are currently offering an extensive vaccination programme for adults and for many children and young people.** Our programme for second doses or for first doses for healthy 12-15 year olds is being quickly developed following national guidance and we will provide updates via our website links for parents for out of school offers and we will be in touch about in school sessions with relevant schools as soon we can to agree plans with you for this term. We would encourage all staff and parents to get fully vaccinated and boosted as soon as possible. Further details are available here <http://www.rochdale.gov.uk/covidvaccine> If a child aged 12 -15 is still requiring a 1st dose then you can book on to a catch up clinic we're running by calling the school immunisation team on 0300 303 0355.

Our public health team and our service for schools continue to monitor closely the rates of infection in our schools and education settings. Our public health team may advise further steps to be taken to support individual settings in staying open. Where this is the case, parents and carers will be advised of these by our school and college leaders.

Thank you again for your continued support

Yours sincerely

Sharon Hubber
Director Children's Services