



Office of the Director of Public Health
Public Health
West Offices
Station Rise
York YO1 6GA

Date: 15 October 2021

Email: enquiries.publichealth@york.gov.uk

Dear Parents and Carers,

RE: COVID-19 measures in schools

Thank you for everything you have done to keep your family and your community safe so far during the coronavirus pandemic and for your patience in supporting schools at this difficult time. Unfortunately the pandemic is not yet over and cases of COVID are continuing to rise in York.

In the last few weeks we have seen a significant rise in the number of children and young people testing positive for COVID and an increase in household transmission of the virus. We are now in a position where we are beginning to see pressures starting to build on the NHS again. We can see from our local data that children are passing infection to family members and into local communities and this is leading to rising infection rates in adults, particularly older adults, who tend to be more vulnerable to the effects of both COVID and flu.

This means we need to consider taking further steps to try and stop the spread of winter viruses and lower our rate of COVID. We are advising all schools in York to consider taking the following precautions based on their risk assessment of each school's individual circumstances:

1. Continue to recommend that children who are unwell with symptoms that may be COVID should stay home from school and book a PCR test. They should stay home until they get their PCR test result.
2. Continue to recommend that children who receive a positive result using a lateral flow test should stay home from school and book a PCR test to confirm their result, even if they do not have symptoms.
3. Introduce a new precaution for daily lateral flow testing of primary and secondary school aged children when they have been identified as a close or household contact of a positive case by NHS Test and Trace. Where possible, parents should ensure their child takes a daily lateral flow test while waiting for their PCR test result. Provided the lateral flow test is negative they can return to school.

This is a temporary measure and will be reviewed every 2 weeks taking into account the rate of infection in schools and the roll-out of the COVID-19 vaccination programme.

Lateral flow tests for this purpose can be collected from one of the council run collection centres, from a local pharmacy, or ordered online for home delivery. Details of how to get tests through these routes is explained on our website here: [Symptom-free coronavirus testing – City of York Council](#)

4. Continue to reinforce the importance of regular hand washing with soap and water or using hand sanitiser when soap and water are not readily available.
5. Continue to promote good respiratory hygiene and “Catch it, Bin it, Kill it” messages to encourage children to catch coughs and sneezes in a tissue and dispose of it in the nearest waste bin.
6. Based on infection rates in school recommend the use of face coverings in communal areas in secondary school continue to support their use on dedicated school transport.
7. Ensure windows are open in the classroom, if only for short periods during the day as we head into colder weather, to aid good ventilation.
8. Reduce mixing between groups as much as possible to reduce the risk of transmission of respiratory infections including COVID.
9. Consider the safety of residential educational visits given the risk of sharing a room overnight increases the chance of catching COVID.

This advice applies to primary and secondary schools. Those who attend post-16 education will already have been offered vaccination for COVID-19 and so are likely to have additional protection already.

Schools may choose not to follow all of the above advice based on their individual risk assessment. As we have done throughout the pandemic, we will continue to support your child's school with Public Health advice as needed, accepting that this will change dependent on what the school infection rates are like at the time.

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 carry out lateral flow testing twice a week if they attend secondary school
- Encourage your child to wear a face covering if they attend secondary school both in communal areas of the school and when travelling by bus to and from school
- Consider carefully the benefits of the COVID and flu vaccination programmes that will shortly be rolled out to all schools in York. You will be receiving further information about this from your school.
- If you or your child develop symptoms of COVID you should book a free NHS test as soon as possible either by going online [Get a free PCR test to check if you have coronavirus \(COVID-19\) - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/get-a-free-pcr-test-to-check-if-you-have-coronavirus) or by calling 119.

To help you decide if your child's symptoms might be COVID please see the information below which has been shared with schools.

Yours sincerely



Sharon Stoltz



Anne Coyle

Director of Public Health

Interim Director of Children's Services

COLD OR COVID?

Have you got any of these symptoms?



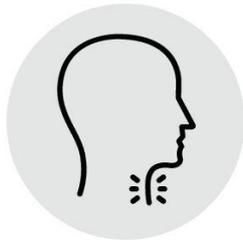
Runny nose



Continuous headache



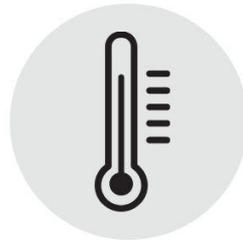
Sneezing



Sore throat



Loss of smell (anosmia)



Fever

It might not be 'just a cold'.

Many of the symptoms of COVID-19 are the same as a cold. A positive lateral flow test is highly likely to be true, but a negative result might not be accurate. If you or your child have any of these symptoms, get a PCR test to make sure and help stop the spread of Covid.

To find out more about how to get a PCR test, please visit www.gov.uk/get-coronavirus-test or call 119 between 7am and 11pm.

