

November 2021

Dear parents and guardians,

I would like to begin by thanking everyone for all your support through what has been one of the most difficult academic years on record.

As we head back to school to continue the autumn term, the position we find ourselves in is far from ideal, with cases of COVID-19 still high in our communities. There are some signs that the picture is stabilising in Lancashire, but it is too early to tell whether the half-term break has acted as a fire breaker, as it has previously.

We are working directly with your school to support them with advice and guidance. We must therefore approach the return to our classrooms with care and keep playing our part to keep our children, young people, and families safe and to minimise the disruption to their education.

We are continuing to follow the Government's guidance, as set out in the 'Contingency framework: education and childcare settings' DfE. The overarching objective of this guidance is to maximise the number of children and young people in face-to face education or childcare and minimise disruption whilst continuing to reduce the ongoing transmission of COVID-19.

I am requesting your support to keep our children safe and well by taking the following actions, the vast of majority of which should by now be familiar to you.

Vaccinations

Everyone aged 12 and over can now get a COVID-19 vaccination. This is one of the most important things we can do to protect our children from becoming unwell with COVID-19

Children aged 12 to 15 can get vaccinated against COVID-19 either through their school or via the [National Booking System](#) online or by calling 119.

It is important to remember that whilst schools may host immunisation services, they are not responsible for securing parental or child consent. This is an important part of this process, as it is with any other vaccination programme. Staff at the vaccination site will always ask for consent before giving the vaccine to your child.

A [consent form is available on GOV.UK](#) to help you and your child discuss this decision.

For young people aged 16 to 17 years and 8 months, there are several sites across Lancashire where they can get a single dose of a COVID-19 vaccine.

Visit www.healthierlsc.co.uk/getmyjab for more info.

Face masks

Face masks should still be worn in enclosed and crowded spaces where you may meet people you don't normally live or work with. This includes public transport and dedicated transport to school or college.

If an education setting is in an outbreak situation, it may be advised that face masks be temporarily worn in communal settings and in some cases, in the classroom.

Testing

One of the most important things we can do to stop the virus from being spread within the school setting is to continue testing twice a week at home using your free lateral flow tests.

If your child has **one or more** of the following COVID-19 symptoms they must isolate and book a PCR test immediately:

1. a high temperature
2. a new, continuous cough
3. loss or change to sense of smell or taste

If your PCR test result is positive, you must isolate from the day their symptoms began and for the next 10 days.

If your child has other symptoms and you are in doubt, take a PCR test and keep them at home like you normally would if unwell.

Close contacts

Contacts of a confirmed case of COVID-19 in England aged under 18 years and 6 months and/or people who are fully vaccinated are exempt from the legal duty to self-isolate. Instead, they should take a PCR test.

Children who are identified as a close contact of a positive case, either in their household or within their school if that setting is in an outbreak situation, may be asked to test daily.

For very young children or those who do not want to test who are close contacts of a positive case in their household, if their school, or nursery setting, is in an outbreak situation, we are advising that they stay away from school for 10 days.

Daily testing allows children to be in school, unless positive or symptomatic.

I have no doubt there will be more challenges ahead, but we can make a positive difference to our children's lives if we work together.

Thank you once again for your patience and support during these difficult times.

Yours sincerely



Dr Sakthi Karunanithi
Director of Public Health