

Education & Learning

County Hall

Topsham Road

Exeter

EX2 4QD

Tel: 01392 383000

Letter to all parents and carers

8 October 2021

Important Covid-19 update for Schools

Dear Parents and Carers

Schools have done an incredible job over the past 18 months of balancing the challenge of continuing to educate our children whilst keeping Covid-19 cases as low as possible. Devon has been one of the highest performing Local Authorities for school attendance throughout the pandemic, which is testament to everyone's hard work and your ongoing support.

We have seen several changes in national policy over the course of the pandemic, with a shift now to trying to get back to some normality. The latest changes introduced by the Government will feel very different to how schools have managed Covid-19 previously. Devon County Council recognises that this has been challenging for parents and schools alike and very different to last year. We want to assure you that schools in Devon are working within the current national Department for Education and Public Health guidance.

These changes include:

- Adults who have been double vaccinated for over 14 days no longer need to isolate if they are identified as a close contact of someone with Covid-19.
- Children and young people aged under 18 years and 6 months who are identified as a close contact, either within school or outside of school, no longer have to isolate and can continue to attend school and social activities as normal, providing they are not showing any symptoms.
- Schools are no longer undertaking contact tracing within their setting given that pupils no longer need to isolate as contacts of cases. NHS Test and Trace will continue to contact positive cases (or their parent or guardian if aged under 18) and ask about their close contacts but will only follow up those they have been provided contact details for.



Actions we are taking with schools:

- All schools continue to have outbreak management plans in place which are reviewed and updated regularly.
- Additional testing may be introduced to identify cases quickly and reduce the chances of pupils and staff being in school whilst infectious.

- Secondary school-aged children, staff and members of the community continue to be encouraged to take a lateral flow test twice a week to help identify cases without any symptoms.
- Schools may communicate with parents/guardians when covid cases are reported in school, followed by a specific communication which will be sent to /parents/guardians when there are identified outbreaks within groups.

What can you do to help?

Please help your school and community by following the guidance below:

<p>When should my child attend school?</p>	 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All children MUST attend school unless they are ill. • Children and young people under 18 years and 6 months (or double-vaccinated adults) <u>do not</u> need to self-isolate or miss school if a member of their household has Covid-19 or they are a close contact of someone who has Covid-19. • Instead, they will need to book a PCR test but can continue attending school, so long as they have no symptoms, while they await the result of the test. If the test result is positive, follow the actions below.
<p>When should my child self-isolate or miss school?</p>	 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If your child develops Covid-19 symptoms at home, they should <u>stay at home</u> and should book a PCR test, <u>NOT</u> a Lateral Flow test. • If your child develops Covid-19 symptoms at school, they will be sent home and you should book them a PCR test. • If your child tests positive on a lateral flow test, they should book a PCR and isolate until they have the result. • If your child tests positive for Covid-19 on a PCR test, they will need to self-isolate for 10 days. The rest of the household does not need to self-isolate if they are under 18 or fully vaccinated – but they still need to book a PCR test and isolate if they test positive. Please report positive results to your school.

The pandemic has had a significant impact on children's development and wellbeing. The above measures will help to ensure that class or school closures are only introduced as a last resort. Schools continue to work very closely with the Department for Education, the UK Health Security Agency (formally Public Health England) and Devon County Council to ensure measures are in place to prevent spread and to respond swiftly as soon as cases are identified.

While rates in the community are lower in Devon than the England average, we are likely to continue to see cases in schools for some time. This means schools will no longer be writing to parents / guardians about individual cases, but will once several covid cases are reported in school, as outlined above. Fortunately most children testing positive are experiencing either mild symptoms or no symptoms at all, however Devon County Council continues to monitor this closely.

Finally, we would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your ongoing support and for working with us to keep our whole community as safe as possible.

Best wishes



Steve Brown
Director of Public Health
Devon County Council



Dawn Stabb
Head of Education and Learning
Devon County Council