



2<sup>nd</sup> December, 2021

## FOR PARENTS INFORMATION REGARDING THE NEW OMICRON VARIANT OF COVID-19 AND ADDITIONAL MEASURES IN SCHOOL

Dear Parents and Carers,

We appreciate that you will already be aware that some national measures have been reintroduced in response to the emergence of a new COVID-19 variant, which is called Omicron.

All individuals who have been identified as a close contact of a suspected or confirmed case of the Omicron variant of COVID-19, irrespective of vaccination status and age, will be contacted directly and required to self-isolate immediately and asked to book a PCR test.

There are still high numbers of children and young people in County Durham testing positive for COVID-19 and the highest case rates are in school age children. This is leading to a spread of COVID-19 within families and into older age groups.

The increase in COVID-19 cases in children is disrupting their education, affecting schools and has an impact on the wider community.

We have received recommendations from the Government and Durham County Council's Public Health team about introducing additional COVID safe control measures. The following measures we already have in place will continue to reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission in school:

- **The use of face coverings** in communal areas for all adults
- Staggered **start and finish times**
- **Children grouped** in school by **year group** to reduce mixing
- **Open days or events** to move to a virtual format
- **whole school events** e.g., assemblies held **remotely**
- **PCR testing for all adults and pupils if they are a close contact of a positive case in their household\***
- **Daily LFT testing at home for 7 days for any adult or pupil in key stage 2 (year 3) or above who is a household contact of a positive case** and is exempt from isolation and continues to attend school. The testing of primary age pupils is at parental discretion. Testing should start from the day the household member has symptoms or if they don't have symptoms from when they tested positive\*
- Additional attention will be given to **ventilation, cleaning and respiratory and hand hygiene**

*\*Note: People who have tested positive with a PCR test within the last 90 days should not be encouraged to test again unless they develop new symptoms*

Please be reassured that for most people, coronavirus (COVID-19) will be a mild illness.

### **LFD Testing advice**

We would recommend you have a supply of LFD testing kits at home in the event you are requested to use them. You can order home testing kits to be delivered to your home here [www.gov.uk/order-coronavirus-rapid-lateral-flow-tests](https://www.gov.uk/order-coronavirus-rapid-lateral-flow-tests)

Or you can collect LFD kits at Community Collect sites across the County. To find your nearest collection point please enter your post code here [maps.test-and-trace.nhs.uk](https://maps.test-and-trace.nhs.uk)

If you pick up tests from a pharmacy, you may be asked for a 'collect code' this helps the NHS match your details to the tests. To get a 'collect code' please visit [test-for-coronavirus.service.gov.uk/collect-lateral-flow-kits](https://test-for-coronavirus.service.gov.uk/collect-lateral-flow-kits)

Please register the result of your home test at [www.gov.uk/report-covid19-result](https://www.gov.uk/report-covid19-result)

### **What to do if your child develops symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19) or tests positive for COVID-19**

The most common symptoms of COVID-19 are recent onset of:

- new continuous cough and/or
- high temperature and/or
- a loss of, or change in, normal sense of taste or smell (anosmia)

**If your child does develop symptoms, they should get a PCR test and remain at home at least until the result is known.** Book a free PCR test at [www.gov.uk/get-coronavirus-test](https://www.gov.uk/get-coronavirus-test) . If positive, your child should isolate for 10 full days after their symptoms appeared.

If you are concerned about your child's symptoms, you can seek advice from NHS 111 at [111.nhs.uk/](https://111.nhs.uk/) or by phoning 111.

If your child has a positive test result but does not have symptoms they should stay at home and self-isolate for 10 full days from the date the positive test was taken. This isolation period will be extended if they go on to develop symptoms by counting 10 full days from the day following their symptom onset.

You must always register the result of your home test at [www.gov.uk/report-covid19-result](https://www.gov.uk/report-covid19-result).

## **Help, support, and further information.**

To help you comply with the requirement to self-isolate, the County Durham Together Community Hub can provide access to essential supplies, financial support and emotional support as well as other services. Please visit [www.durham.gov.uk/covid19help](http://www.durham.gov.uk/covid19help) or call the Community Hub on 03000 260260 for further details.

There is also support available the coronavirus section via [durhamlocate.org.uk](http://durhamlocate.org.uk)

It has been brought to governors and my attention that some parents are unhappy that our COVID measures are still in place and we have not been able to welcome you into our schools for performances, stay and play events and parent consultations. I understand this, but our children must come first. We know the impact of school closing has had on pupils both emotionally, socially and academically.

## **Our commitment to face to face learning for all children is our absolute priority.**

We have had a number of pupils and staff with COVID across both schools, and an outbreak at Lumley Junior School. Despite this, and with high levels of staff absence we have remained open for all pupils. The situation could have been much worse if we had not kept our stringent COVID measures in place. This is a success and I cannot praise all of the staff in both schools highly enough for taking on extra duties and responsibilities to ensure we remained open.

Finally, we would like to thank you for everything you've done to keep your family and community safe, and for your patience in continuing to support our school during this challenging time.

Yours sincerely,

Tracey A. Wilson  
Head Teacher