

Your ref:

Our ref: AK/jc.4

Enquiries to: Audrey Kingham

Email: Audrey.Kingham@northumberland.gov.uk

Tel direct: (01670) 622742

Date: 29th October 2021

Dear Parents and Carers

Additional COVID-19 control measures in schools

There has been a large increase in the number of children and young people in Northumberland testing positive for COVID-19 and the highest case rates are in school age children. This is leading to spread of COVID-19 within families and into older age groups.

Northumberland has the highest uptake of vaccination in adults in England and we know that the vaccine is helping to prevent serious illness and deaths. However, the vaccine does not always stop people from becoming infected or spreading COVID-19 and we know that those with underlying conditions are more vulnerable.

The increase in COVID-19 in children is disrupting their education, affecting schools and has an impact on the wider community. Although children and adults who develop COVID-19 often have mild illness, many adults may be absent from work because COVID has spread within their household or they need to care for children who have tested positive.

Our priority is to avoid any further disruption to face to face education. We now need to take further action to reduce the spread of COVID-19 in schools and the wider community across Northumberland

We have advised schools to implement the following measures as soon as possible after the half term:

1. Testing for household contacts of COVID-19

All close contacts of a case of COVID-19 should arrange a PCR test. School staff and secondary school age pupils who are household contacts of a positive case and continue to attend school because they are exempt from isolation are encouraged to undertake daily lateral flow testing until they receive a negative PCR test.

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

2. Face coverings

We recommend that adults and secondary school age pupils wear face coverings in communal areas



3.Reduce mixing between year groups and classes

Reduce mixing as far as possible to reduce the risk of transmission of COVID-19

4.Schools will carefully consider whether large events should continue. This may include suspending whole-school or year group events and holding events such as parents evenings and open days online.

5.Schools will carefully consider whether educational trips and residential visits should go ahead

6.Schools will continue to pay careful attention to ventilation, cleaning and hand hygiene

The Public Health and Education teams work closely together, monitoring COVID-19 cases and the impact on schools and will review these recommendations at regular intervals.

As well as the measures that schools are taking, we appreciate your continued support in:

1.Encouraging your child to undertake twice weekly lateral flow tests if they of secondary school age

2.Encouraging your child to wear a face covering in communal areas at school and in enclosed indoor spaces if they are of secondary school age

3.Carefully considering the benefits of the COVID-19 vaccination programme for children aged 12-15 years

4.Arranging a free PCR test if you or your child develop symptoms of COVID-19. You can book this a <https://www.gov.uk/get-coronavirus-test> or by calling 119. It is important to self isolate until you receive the results and follow advice from NHS Test and Trace.

We appreciate that this continues to be challenging time for parents. We are grateful for your continued support for schools and in helping to keep your family and community safe.

Yours sincerely

Audrey Kingham
Director of Education and Skills



Liz

Morgan
Interim Executive Director Public Health
and Community Services