

Dear Parent / Carer,

The approach to COVID-19 in school-aged children is to maximise children's access to education. As you are aware, children are very unlikely to become seriously ill with COVID-19 infection, but they do need to self-isolate if they are infected. Whilst self-isolating, they miss out on the benefit of in-school education which is so important. It is therefore extremely important that we try to limit the spread of COVID-19 within a school setting so as to maximise school attendance at all times.

Although the case numbers in Essex are lower than the England average, COVID-19 infections in secondary school-aged children in Essex are increasing. At this rate, it is expected that some secondary schools could see significant numbers of pupils with COVID-19. You can help limit these numbers by:

- Supporting your secondary school child, if you are not already doing so, to undertake twice-weekly lateral flow device tests.
- Being alert to COVID-19 symptoms in your child (high temperature, new continuous cough, or loss of sense of smell or taste).
- Encouraging hand hygiene in your child.

In addition, the COVID-19 vaccine is being offered to schoolchildren aged 12 years old and over. This vaccination reduces the chance of a child getting COVID-19 and the disruption to their education that would bring.

As stated above, if you are not already undertaking twice weekly lateral flow device tests, we would strongly encourage you to do so. This will ensure that as much asymptomatic infection as possible is picked up and will help schools to continue to operate at full capacity and minimise the spread of infection through the school and wider community. The school will provide you with test kits for your child, or you can collect test kits from your nearest pharmacy using one of the new collect codes which can be downloaded from <https://test-for-coronavirus.service.gov.uk/collect-lateral-flow-kits>. You can then hand this into your local pharmacy, who will provide you with test kits.

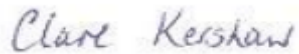
You must then report **all** results to the school. If your school is using the Test Register system, they will be able to help you to set this up. If a positive result is returned, your child/young person will need to seek a confirmatory PCR test and isolate for 10 days according to national guidance. If the PCR comes back negative, your child can return to school if they are well enough to do so. More information about lateral flow testing can be found here: [Regular Rapid Lateral Flow Coronavirus \(Covid-19\) Tests](#).

If someone in your child's class tests positive, you do not need to do anything unless you are contacted by Test and Trace, identifying them as a close contact. If this does happen, Test and Trace will advise you on what to do next.

This letter only applies to children who have not tested positive for Covid-19 within the last 90 days, as children who have had Covid-19 within 90 days may test positive again. However, if your child develops new Covid-19 symptoms, they should be re-tested using a PCR test.

We appreciate that the changes in guidance can cause anxiety for some, but it is important that the education of our children and young people is prioritised this academic year. The likelihood of serious illness in children is extremely low and after 18 months of serious disruption, the DfE and the Local Authority are committed to ensuring that all children and young people in Essex have every opportunity to catch up and exceed their potential.

Best wishes,



Clare Kershaw
Director of Education
Essex County Council



Mike Gogarty
Director of Public Health and Wellbeing
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