

19th July 2021

Dear Parent/Carers

I know this has been a challenging school year for everyone because of the continuing COVID pandemic. Esteem academies have tried to provide the best quality of education for our pupils while at the same time ensuring that schools are safe places for learning. This has been hard and there has been some disruption. But we have done our best to keep this to a minimum. We could not have done this without your patience and cooperation. So, I wish to thank you for working with us for the sake of the children and young people in our schools. This explains how the changes to the COVID restrictions will affect your child's school.

Step 4 of Government response to COVID-19

From 19th July and 16th August government regulations and guidance related to managing Covid-19 in schools is changing. Please see below the main changes that will affect your child.

End of requirement to self-isolate if a 'close contact'

From 16 August 2021, children under the age of 18 years old will no longer be required to self-isolate if they are contacted by NHS Test and Trace as a close contact of a positive COVID-19 case. Instead, children will be contacted by NHS Test and Trace, informed they have been in close contact with a positive case and advised to take a PCR test. They do not need to self-isolate while waiting for the result but must start to self-isolate if the PCR test is positive.

We would encourage all individuals to take a PCR test if advised to do so. 18-year-olds will be treated in the same way as children until 4 months after their 18th birthday, to allow them the opportunity to get fully vaccinated. At which point, they will be subject to the same rules as adults and so if they choose not to get vaccinated, they will need to self-isolate if identified as a close contact.

Schools will continue to have a role in working with health protection teams in the case of a local outbreak. If there is an outbreak in a setting or if central government offers the area an enhanced response package, a director of public health might advise a setting to temporarily reintroduce some increased control measures.

Other changes from September

Also, from September, in our schools it will no longer be mandatory for staff, pupils or visitors to wear face coverings in communal or classroom areas.

All schools will be updating their establishment risk assessments in line with the revised DfE guidance and will continue to take sensible precautions, maintain high levels of cleanliness and ventilation, and ensure all other required health and safety measures are still in place.

The DfE guidance is that the controls must continue to be:

1. Ensuring good hygiene for everyone.
2. Maintaining appropriate cleaning regimes.
3. Keeping occupied spaces well ventilated.
4. Following public health advice on testing, self-isolation and managing confirmed cases of COVID-19

Testing for secondary age pupils prior to returning to school in September 2021

The Government is advising that all secondary age pupils should be invited to take part in lateral flow testing for COVID-19 before returning to school in September. By encouraging testing we will continue to help to reduce the spread in our schools and in the wider community through asymptomatic transmission.

Unfortunately, the logistical and safety challenges of setting up testing for pupils in our schools mean that we will not be testing pupils on-site. This is mainly due to the difficulties of finding an available safe space to set up a test centre, and having enough staff resources to support testing, when all our pupils are returning to learning in the classroom. We believe that our staff time needs to be prioritised for welcoming pupils back into school and ensuring their health and well-being can be supported appropriately as they settle them back into their educational and therapeutic routines for the new academic year.

To this end we request that parents/carers support their child to undertake two home tests, 3-4 days apart, prior to returning to school in September, with the second test being the day before the start of term.

Results will have to be reported to NHS Test and Trace as soon as the test is completed, either online or by telephone, as set out in the home test kit instructions. If a test is positive, or your child gets coronavirus symptoms, you must tell the school and:

- self-isolate immediately
- get a PCR test to confirm the result by calling 119

Testing is not mandatory but is strongly encouraged. Rapid testing detects cases quickly – in under 30 minutes – meaning positive cases can isolate immediately. This can be the difference between children being able to stay in school, or a class being sent home due to an outbreak.

Pupils who choose not to test will still be able to attend school every day, as long as they are not displaying symptoms of coronavirus.

Secondary age pupils should then continue to test twice weekly at home until the end of September, when this will be reviewed.

If parents/carers require further stocks of LFT home test kits please contact your school, or order from the NHS Covid website.

Thank you for your cooperation and I wish you a happy and relaxing summer break. We will look forward to seeing you and your children at the start of the new term.



Your sincerely,
Julian Scholefield (Chief Executive Officer)