



## Adult Social Care, Public Health & Hub

Date 28 February 2022  
Ref: STG/kk  
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Dear Parent and Carer,

### **RE: Response to government's Living Safely with COVID-19 plan**

The Government has announced their COVID-19 response 'Living with COVID-19' strategy. In England, most of the measures that have been in place to control the spread of the virus during the pandemic are no longer required by law. National guidance instead is calling on us to each take personal responsibility to ensure our actions minimise the risks of continued COVID-19 transmission and protect the vulnerable.

**With COVID-19 restrictions lifted, it could be easy to revert back to what life was like before the pandemic. However, I would still urge for caution at this time.** We must remember that it will take time for us to adapt and learn to live safely with the virus in the borough - it has not gone away.

There are certain control measures that we have asked nurseries, childminders, schools and colleges to continue to maintain to reduce the risk of transmission of COVID-19 in their setting. Please continue to support our education settings by adhering to these.

#### **If your child feels unwell**

- **If your child feels unwell and does develop symptoms associated with the COVID-19 virus, I would urge you to continue to test them for the virus.**
- They should stay at home and you should book a PCR test by calling 119 or book online <https://www.gov.uk/get-coronavirus-test>
- Test sites are open 7 days a week. Order a home test kit if you cannot get to a test site.
- To protect other pupils and staff from possible infection with COVID-19, the government have advised that education settings can, in reasonable judgment, refuse your child(s) attendance if they have symptoms.

#### **If your child tests positive**

- Parents should notify the education setting if their child has an infectious disease.
- **If your child does test positive for the COVID-19 virus, I would ask that they continue to self-isolate for at least five days and only return to school after having two negative lateral flow tests on consecutive days.**

- Whilst doing so is no longer the law, it is very sensible practice and helps us minimise the risk of COVID-19 spreading in the school.
- Lateral flow device tests will be free of charge until 1st April so do request them from the NHS or your pharmacist if you need them. <https://www.gov.uk/order-coronavirus-rapid-lateral-flow-tests>

### Symptom-free testing

- The government has removed the requirement for staff and pupils in mainstream secondary schools to continue taking part in twice weekly symptom-free testing and advised following symptom-free testing advice for the general population.
- If your child is a secondary school pupil they should **continue to test regularly, until 31 March when further government announcements are expected**. If the test comes back positive, then it is important to let your school or setting know and self-isolate and they should take a PCR test to confirm.
- **All parents and carers are also encouraged to continue symptom-free testing using a lateral low device regularly to check you are not COVID positive.**
- Lateral flow device tests will be free of charge until 1st April so do request them from the NHS or your pharmacist if you need them. <https://www.gov.uk/order-coronavirus-rapid-lateral-flow-tests>
- In the event of an outbreak, your child's school may also be advised by Walsall Public Health to undertake testing for staff and students of secondary age and above for a period of time and we will advise accordingly.

### Twice-weekly testing should continue for,

- Staff and students of secondary age and above in Special Schools, Pupil Referral Units or specialist units in mainstream schools or further education colleges.
- Staff in residential units in children's social care (children's homes) and children of secondary age and above in children's homes are also advised to continue twice-weekly testing. Children and young people arriving in secure children's homes should test on arrival.

More information on what parents and carers need to know about early years providers, schools and colleges during COVID-19 can be found on the Government website <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/what-parents-and-carers-need-to-know-about-early-years-providers-schools-and-colleges-during-the-coronavirus-COVID-19-outbreak>

**It is important to remember, outside of education and in our everyday lives, the simple behaviours we've all displayed over these past 2 years are still the most important for all of us.**

Continue to wear a face covering in crowded and enclosed spaces, wash your hands regularly and follow good respiratory hygiene by following catch it, bin it, kill it. This means using tissues if you cough or sneeze, dispose of the waste in a bin and then wash your hands afterwards. Continue to let fresh air into your homes and workplaces.

The vaccine still remains our best form of defence against the virus, it is never too late to come forward for the vaccine. Our walk-in vaccination centres, including the Saddler's Centre in Walsall Town Centre, remains open, as well as appointments being available for those who have not yet had a 1st, 2nd or booster dose.

If the number of positive cases substantially increases in your nursery, school, or college, or if your nursery, school, or college is in an enhanced response area, you might be advised that additional measures should be introduced.

The COVID-19 case rate and the impact on Walsall education settings continues to be monitored very closely and I will continue to keep you updated.

Thank you for your ongoing support.

Yours sincerely



**Stephen Gunther**  
**Director of Public Health and Hub**