

Tuesday 14 December 2021 - Secondary

Dear Parents and Carers,

I am writing to advise you of the changes to Government guidance issued earlier today.

Close contacts of confirmed cases of Coronavirus

From today, the Government has changed the rules regarding anyone identified as a close contact of a confirmed, positive Coronavirus case. These rules apply to close contacts of both the Delta and Omicron variants.

Any child (aged between five and 18 years and six months) who is identified by NHS Test and Trace as a close contact of a COVID-19 case does not need to self-isolate.

Instead, they should continue to attend their school, but are strongly encouraged to take daily Lateral Flow Device (LFD) tests for seven days. If your child tests positive on an LFD test, they child should isolate immediately, and you should book a PCR test for them online: [PCR Test Booking](#). Children awaiting a PCR test result should not attend school.

Children under 5 years are exempt from self-isolation and do not need to take part in daily testing of close contacts.

If your child is currently in isolation having been identified as a close contact, they can come out of isolation but are strongly advised to take LFD tests for the remaining period of the original isolation.

Children with Coronavirus symptoms

If your child has COVID-19 [symptoms](#) it remains the case that they should stay at home and self-isolate immediately. They should take a PCR test as soon as possible. If this PCR test result is positive, they must continue to self-isolate.

Asymptomatic testing of children

There is no change to the approach to asymptomatic testing. We continue to strongly encourage all staff, students (primary, secondary and further education students) and all households to take part in regular testing if they are not showing symptoms. This will help to reduce the risk of the virus unknowingly entering the school community. Your school has been supporting your child to participate in twice weekly testing and we continue to encourage this approach and to support schools with their communication to you about this process.

LFD test kits are available from schools. You can also access free LFD tests in a number of ways, including at the local LFD site in your district, by collecting a home LFD kit from a test



site, or by ordering online. More information can be found here: [Regular Rapid Lateral Flow Coronavirus \(Covid-19\) Tests](#).

Preparation for the start of the new term in January

We would encourage your child to continue to undertake twice weekly LFD tests during the school holiday and prior to returning to their setting in January. With social mixing during the holiday period, it is vital that we support a successful start to the new term.

Secondary schools have also been asked to offer an onsite test to children before they can start their education in January.

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

Thank you for all for the support that you continue to provide for your child's school at this challenging time.

With best wishes

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Clare Kershaw".

Clare Kershaw
Director of Education
Essex County Council

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mike Gogarty".

Mike Gogarty
Director of Public Health and Wellbeing
Essex County Council