

10 December 2020

Dear Parent or Carer,

### **Increase in Covid rates in Basildon**

I am writing to you regarding the recent increase in coronavirus cases across the Basildon district and in turn within your school, the action we feel is appropriate to stop further spread and protect your children, family and friends.

We recognise the impact that the virus is having on schools in terms of pupils testing positive, or being identified as a contact of someone who has tested positive and we are continuing to work very closely with all schools in the area to manage this.

We want to ensure that your child's education is not disrupted if at all possible. As you know, your school has a robust risk assessment in place with strict preventative measures to keep all pupils and staff safe. It also continues to follow appropriate advice and guidelines from Public Health England and the Local Authority Education department.

We are now asking you to apply for a home PCR Covid test for your child/children. This is to identify any Covid cases where the individual is unaware that they have the virus because they have no symptoms. We ask that you apply for a test whether your child is displaying Covid symptoms or not and whether they are currently attending school on-site or learning at home.

Children who have tested positive in the last 12 weeks do not need to be re-tested.

### **Accessing a Covid test**

You can order a home Covid test online at here <https://self-referral.test-for-coronavirus.service.gov.uk/antigen/condition> or by phoning 119 and you should select the option that you have been asked to be tested by your local authority.

The test will be sent to you through the post with instructions included. Doing this as soon as possible will help to identify any pupils who may have the virus without knowing and allow schools to act more quickly to prevent it spreading within bubbles or year groups.

Your child does not need to self-isolate whilst you are waiting for your test result and can attend school, unless they have been asked to learn at home.

### **Following the test**

#### **If the test result is negative**

If the test result is negative, they do not need to self-isolate or take any further action and can continue to attend school. They should continue to practice social distancing and good hand hygiene in-line with the national guidance.

If they been identified as a close contact of a positive individual, they must continue to self-isolate as directed despite the negative test.

### **If the test result is positive**

If the test result is positive, they and their close contacts, including the remaining household will need to self-isolate, and not attend school in-line with national guidance. You should advise your school of the test result straight away.

Further information is available at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-stay-at-home-guidance/stay-at-home-guidance-for-households-with-possible-coronavirus-covid-19-infection>.

### **Social Distancing**

The evidence also shows that some young people within this age group are not following the guidelines around social distancing when outside of their education setting, either on the way into or home from school and at weekends.

For any preventative measures and current guidance to be as effective as it can be, it is imperative that young people practise social distancing at all times while outside of their education setting.

This is because within the school setting there are strict measures in place to prevent the spread of the virus. These measures are not present when young people are socialising together outside of the school environment and therefore the potential for transmission is significantly increased – not just between young people, but also anyone else they may come into contact with while out in the community.

### **Face coverings**

We do encourage you and your child/children to wear face coverings at appropriate times. For secondary aged students, it is compulsory to wear a face covering on transport, when moving around school or in communal areas outside of the classroom. For primary aged children, it is not appropriate to wear face coverings at school but adults may be asked to wear face coverings when entering the school site.

We appreciate that this has been a difficult year for families and that this is an unsettling ask for some, however we must all come together now and do what we can to prevent further spread of the virus.

It is especially important to take action at this time, so that we can curb the spread of the virus and ensure families can safely spend their festive period together, in line with the new guidelines.

Please do access a test for your child/children as requested and speak to your school if you have any questions.

Thank you for your continued support.



Dr Mike Gogarty  
Director of Public Health  
Essex County Council