



Contact: Dr Rupert Suckling
Our ref: RS/SC/Schools
Telephone: 01302 734581
Email: PHEnquiries@doncaster.gov.uk
Date: August 26 2021

Dear Parent/Carer,

I hope you have had an enjoyable summer. I wanted to write to you ahead of the new academic year to bring you up to date with the changes that will be in place for schools and other education settings from September.

After the challenges and disruption of the last 18 months, I am pleased to say our schools and colleges are prioritising a return to face-to-face education. We know Covid-19 is usually a mild to moderate illness for the majority of children and young people, and it's important to balance this with the fact that face-to-face learning is vital for pupils' wellbeing.

Therefore, from September, school and college settings will largely return to normal, with the removal of 'bubbles' meaning children and young people will be able to mix more.

However, testing and isolating will still play a role in how educational settings manage Covid-19 infections, so it is important that you familiarise yourself with the guidance below:

Testing

Testing continues to be important and, when pupils return to school, secondary age children will be asked to take two lateral flow tests (LFTs) at school or college, three to five days apart. They will then need to continue to test twice a week at home.

Please take the time to talk to your child about these changes and encourage secondary school age pupils to continue to test at home once onsite testing has been completed at the start of term.

Staggered start and finish times

Check what time your child needs to be in school. Staggered start and finish times will be ending but some schools may still change things to manage the onsite testing and start of term.

Make sure your child regularly washes their hands

Regular hand washing still has an important part to play in reducing transmission of Covid-19. Please make sure that your child understands this and knows to wash their hands regularly.

If your child has symptoms:

If your child develops Covid-19 symptoms, they **must stay at home**. This means they **must not** attend school or college, see their friends or visit family members outside of the household. They should go for a PCR test (available by calling 119 or visiting nhs.uk/coronavirus) and isolate while they wait for the results.

If your child is identified as a contact of a positive Covid-19 case:

If you are contacted by NHS Test & Trace, or by your child's school or college, to tell you that your child has been identified as a close contact of a positive case, your child **does not** need to isolate.

Instead, they should go for a PCR test and can continue to attend school/college while they wait for the results, as long as they have no symptoms and are well. If the test is positive or they develop symptoms, then they must begin isolation for ten days.

Other members of the household are not required to isolate if they are fully vaccinated or are below the age of 18.

Children previously classed as Clinically Extremely Vulnerable (CEV) to Covid-19

The Government has recently announced people under the age of 18 are no longer considered to be clinically extremely vulnerable to Covid-19 and should continue to follow the same guidance as everyone else.

This is due to recent clinical studies showing that children and young people are at very low risk of serious illness if they catch the virus and means they have been removed from the Shielded Patient List.

Therefore, unless children and young people have been advised to isolate or reduce social contact by their specialist, due to the nature of their medical condition or treatment rather than because of the pandemic, they are able to continue to attend school.

Vaccination

Getting fully vaccinated is the most important thing you and your family can do to help stop the spread of Covid-19 and, at the time of writing, vaccination is being offered to everyone over the age of 16-years-old and certain eligible 12–15-year-olds identified by GP practices.

To book a vaccine for your child, visit www.nhs.uk/covid-vaccination, or they can attend a pop-up clinic without an appointment. Details of pop-up vaccination clinics in Doncaster can be found here: www.doncasterccg.nhs.uk/covidvaxclinics/

If you haven't had your vaccine yet, or haven't had your second dose, please arrange to do so as soon as you can by visiting www.nhs.uk/covid-vaccination or calling 119 to book an appointment.

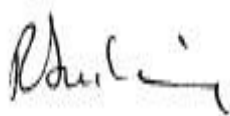
As the big back to school return begins, I'd like to take this opportunity to thank you for all you are doing to help us reduce the transmission of Covid-19 here in Doncaster. I understand how difficult the last 18 months have been and it is a real landmark moment to see many of the restrictions being lifted across the country.

However, the virus is still here, and it is important to continue practicing measures such as frequent handwashing and regular LFT testing to protect both yourself and those around you.

We have a great team of dedicated public health professionals here in Doncaster who continue to work tirelessly to keep our communities safe, and we will be working closely with our borough's education settings and Public Health England to manage any outbreaks, doing all we can to keep disruption to schoolchildren to a minimum.

Thank you again for your support, and I wish you and your families a happy and healthy autumn term.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Rupert Suckling', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Dr Rupert Suckling, Director of Public Health Doncaster