

September 2021 – Return to School Guidelines

The government's recent guidance for schools states:

'there is now an imperative to reduce the disruption to children and young people's education - particularly given that the direct clinical risks to children are extremely low, and every adult has been offered a first vaccine and the opportunity for 2 doses by mid-September.'

And, you will have seen in the news, bubbles and periods of isolation are no longer required in England. However, this is not as simple as thinking that COVID-19 has gone away, and there are still measures we need to follow to ensure any possible risk is controlled in a measured and sensible way. This document outlines the plans we have in place for our September return regarding COVID-19 and the government's control measures.

Control Measures

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

1. Ensuring Good Hygiene for Everyone

We will continue to have hand sanitiser in every classroom. Students and staff will be encouraged to use this whenever they enter and leave a room.

Tissues and lidded bins will be available in every room and students will be encouraged to 'catch it, bin it, kill it' to help reduce the transmission of any germs.

2. Maintain Appropriate Cleaning Regimes

We will continue to employ additional cleaning staff to be onsite during the school day and will continue to ask them to focus on cleaning frequently touched surfaces. This is in addition to our normal cleaning schedules.

3. Keep Occupied Spaces Well Ventilated

The government has continued to stress the need for us to provide well-ventilated areas for students to work in. However, they have changed their guidance to say that, 'You should balance the need for increased ventilation while maintaining a comfortable temperature.'

We are therefore recommending that teachers try to keep windows open to aid with ventilation wherever possible. We will also be utilising the carbon dioxide monitors that the government are issuing to schools as soon as they are delivered.

4. Follow public health advice on testing, self-isolation and managing confirmed cases of COVID-19.

Nobody should come into school if they have symptoms of COVID-19. Despite what we have all seen online, or heard anecdotally, the official definition of COVID-19 symptoms remains:

- A high temperature.
- A new, continuous cough.
- A loss of, or change to, your sense of smell or taste.

If your child has any of these symptoms they should stay at home and arrange to take a PCR test.

If a student develops any of these symptoms during the school day, they will be taken to the COVID-19 Isolation Room. They will wait in this well-ventilated room until their parents collect them. The room will be thoroughly cleaned before being used by another student.

FAQs

Will the school be phoning me to say my child needs to isolate?

No. Schools across the country are no longer being asked to contact close contacts of a positive COVID-19 case. Instead, this is being undertaken by NHS Test and Trace. If your child is a close contact of a positive case Test and Trace will contact you.

Since the 16 August 2021, children under the age of 18 no longer need to self-isolate if they are contacted by NHS Test and Trace as being a close contact of a positive COVID-19 case. Instead, they will be advised to take a PCR test.

If a student is 18 years old, they will be treated in the same way as children until 4 months after their 18th birthday (so that they have a chance to get vaccinated).

Adults who have been fully vaccinated will no longer be required to self-isolate if identified as a close contact.

Will my child have to wear a face covering?

The government has removed the requirement to wear face coverings in law but 'recommends' that we wear masks whenever we are in enclosed or crowded spaces where we come into contact with people we don't normally meet. They give the example of being on public transport.

The local bus companies have already contacted parents to say that they will continue to expect students to wear masks on their services.

In school, we no longer need to wear masks – although anyone who feels more comfortable wearing a mask (staff or student) can continue to do so.

If there is an outbreak of COVID-19 in our school, or if the local rates increase, Public Health England may review this and ask us to reintroduce mask wearing.

Visitors to the school site will still be asked to wear a mask.

Will the school be sending home updates on how many COVID-19 cases there are amongst our students/staff?

No. Information about COVID-19 cases has now been taken over by NHS Track and Trace. Public Health England may direct us to contact parents if they consider there to be an outbreak of COVID-19 cases at our school.

What would the school do if there was an outbreak of COVID-19 cases?

The new guidance directs us to follow the advice of Public Health England (PHE). They explain that PHE would work with the school to advise us when we need to utilise our 'Outbreak Management Plan' and re-introduce some of the covid safe measures.

Will the school provide work for my child if they test positive for COVID-19 but are well enough to work?

Yes. Teachers will continue to post their lessons each day on Google Classroom. If your child is at home, they can access this immediately and be doing the same work as their peers at school.

Do we still need to do weekly tests?

Yes, although this decision will be reviewed by the government at the end of September. Students should take two lateral flow tests in the week they return to school (3 to 5 days apart). Lateral flow tests can be collected from your local pharmacy or from one of the collection points around the local area. Further guidance can be found using this link:

<https://www.kent.gov.uk/social-care-and-health/health/protect-kent-and-medway/test-and-trace/how-to-get-tested/symptom-free-testing>

Home-test kits are also available through the school. Any parent who would like to collect a kit for their child can do so on Tuesday 31 August between 9.00am - 2.30pm from Cryalls Gate.

Throughout September you should continue to test your child twice a week.

Where can I get more information about the current guidelines?

Further information about the new COVID-19 regulations can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus>