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Ask for Debbie Watson
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Dear Parents/ Carers,

Advice to all parents and carers of primary school pupils attending Tameside schools

Tameside Council's Public Health Team is working closely with our schools to reduce the number of COVID-19 cases and to ensure our schools can remain open and children can continue to access in-person education.

The number of cases across our communities has remained consistently high, with rates amongst children and young people being higher than all other age ranges since September 2021. We have also now seen a substantial increase in rates among 5-10 year olds and the number of outbreaks in primary schools. We are writing to you to ask for your support and to tell you about some new measures we are introducing in primary schools. These measures will be in place for at least the next four weeks, and we will be reviewed ready for the new term starting Tuesday 4 January 2022. We would also like to share some key messages with you.

FACE COVERINGS IN SCHOOLS

Many of you will know, Tameside secondary school staff and pupils has been asked to wear face coverings whilst on the move around on the school's premises, and whilst on public/school transport.

As the evidence of wearing face coverings remains strong for reducing transmission of COVID-19, we are now asking all primary school staff, visitors, parents and carers to wear face coverings when on the school's premises. This includes outdoor areas in school grounds such as the playground during drop-off/pick-up. **Pupils will not need to wear face coverings**, and staff will not be required to wear face coverings while teaching in class as we recognise this is more disruptive to teaching and learning.

TESTING

LFD Testing For Household Contacts

Since August, adults who are double vaccinated and children do not need to self-isolate if they live with someone who has COVID-19.

We are asking all pupils in Key Stage 2 and staff members **who live with someone who has COVID-19** to do daily lateral flow tests (LFD test) before coming into school (unless exempt-see below). Pupils should start this testing from the day their household member either became **unwell with COVID-19 or tested positive** if they did not have symptoms and continue this for 10 days.

Please remember:

- if your child tests negative, they can continue attending school.
- if your child has a positive LFD result, they must start isolating, have a PCR test and inform school.
- if they develop COVID-19 symptoms, they should book a PCR test. It is important that people with COVID-19 symptoms do not rely on a negative LFD test and they should have a PCR test. If your child develops symptoms of COVID-19, they must not come to school and should remain at home.

Exemptions LFD Testing for Household Contacts

The groups exempt from this advice are:

- Any child who cannot tolerate daily testing, for example children aged 5 and under, in Key Stage 1, or those with special educational additional needs.
- Any child, aged between 5 – 16, who has tested positive for COVID-19 via a PCR test within the past 90 days.

Routine LFD Asymptomatic Testing

We strongly encourage families to test at home twice a week and to register their results, even when negative. This important testing helps to pick up the infection early, preventing further spread, keeping families, friends and schools protected from COVID-19.

Positive Cases in School

If your child is a contact of a case in school, please book them in to take a PCR test as soon as possible (unless they have had a positive PCR test in the last 90 days). Children aged 4 and under who are identified as a contact will not be advised to take a PCR test unless the positive case was someone in their own household.

SYMPTOMS

As we enter the winter period, we are asking families to be vigilant for symptoms. If you or someone in your household has symptoms, please isolate and access a PCR test as soon as possible and isolate until the result is available. People who get a positive PCR test must continue to isolate as usual.

The most common symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19) are recent onset of:

- new continuous cough and/or;
- high temperature and/or;
- a loss of, or change in, normal sense of taste or smell (anosmia).

However, people frequently present with a wider range of symptoms. If you or your child feel newly unwell and you are concerned, then please access a PCR test. For many people, coronavirus (COVID-19) will be a mild illness.

HOW TO STOP COVID-19 SPREADING

There are things you can do to help reduce the risk of you and anyone you live with getting ill with COVID-19:

- Isolate and book a PCR test if you have symptoms. You can book the PCR test here: <https://www.gov.uk/get-coronavirus-test>
- wash your hands with soap and water often – do this for at least 20 seconds
- use hand sanitiser gel if soap and water are not available

- wash your hands as soon as you get home
- try to meet people who you don't live with outdoors
- allow ventilation in the house through opening windows
- cover your mouth and nose with a tissue or your sleeve (not your hands), when you cough or sneeze
- put used tissues in the bin immediately and wash your hands afterwards
- Participate in twice-weekly LFD testing following national guidelines (recommended for 11 years and over). Order LFD tests for your household, visit www.nhs.uk/get-tested/. We encourage you to log your results here: www.gov.uk/report-COVID-1919-result
- have the COVID-19 vaccination if eligible, ensuring that if over 16 years you have both doses.

FURTHER INFORMATION

Further information is available at <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-COVID-19/> and if you have any queries you can contact covid-19@tameside.gov.uk.

We understand how disappointing and frustrating it is to have to introduce these measures and share these messages again. We will shortly be coming into winter, a time when we really need to be keeping people safe and reducing the number of COVID-19 infections.

Thank you for your support.

Yours sincerely,



Debbie Watson
Interim Director of Population Health