

Director of Public Health Office
Sheffield Town Hall, Pinstone Street, Sheffield, S1 2HH
www.sheffield.gov.uk



19th August 2021

Dear Parent/Carer,

I hope that you have been enjoying this summer and everything Sheffield has to offer as restrictions begin to lift. After an incredibly challenging 18 months, the city is re-opening and we are starting to experience those things that we have been missing for many months. As the new academic year approaches it provides us with an opportunity to ensure that children and young people can enjoy learning again and experience their school and nursery settings as they did before the pandemic. I wanted to write to you with regards to the changes we will see in schools and other education settings from September.

Firstly, we will be prioritising a return to face to face education. We are encouraging all children and young people to take every opportunity to attend their school, college or nursery this year. This is especially important given the disruption and lost learning pupils have faced during the pandemic.

We know that vaccination is effective in protecting people against COVID and that more and more people in Sheffield have been vaccinated. We also know through research that coronavirus transmission rates in schools are roughly equal to or less than those of the surrounding community. This means that what happens in schools or nursery reflects what is happening in the local community. There remains risk everywhere, every day in all that we do. Thankfully for the majority of children COVID is a mild to moderate illness. We know that education causes significant impact on pupils' health and wellbeing and their life chances. So, we must balance all this.

I have worked with schools, childcare and further education settings during the pandemic and know how hard they have been working to reduce transmission whilst continuing to deliver education and childcare of a high standard. I know they'll continue to do all they can to reduce risk and provide a safe environment for your child.

Given all of this, from September education and childcare settings will all largely be back to normal. There will be no 'bubbles' and children will be able to mix more.

Testing continues to be important. When pupils go back to school, secondary age children will be asked to take two lateral flow device (LFD) tests at school or college three to five days apart. It is important that they then continue to test twice a week at home, at least until the end of September when this will be reviewed.

The start of the new academic year:

So ahead of the start of the new term I'd ask you to:

- Talk to your child about how school is returning to normal
- Support the LFD secondary school testing programme and encourage secondary age pupils to continue to test at home once the onsite testing has been completed at the start of term

- Check with your school 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.
- Ensure that your child continues to regularly wash their hands. This is an important measure to reduce transmission.

If your child has symptoms:

- If your child has COVID symptoms, they must **stay at home**. They must not go to school or nursery and they should go for a PCR test and isolate.

If your child is identified as a contact of a positive COVID case:

- You may be contacted by NHS Test & Trace or the school/setting and informed that your child has been identified as a contact. They will not need to isolate but will need to book and attend for a PCR test. They will be able to continue going to school/nursery if they have no symptoms and are well. If the test is positive or they have symptoms they must then isolate. Others in the household will not be required to isolate if they are fully vaccinated or are below the age of 18 years and 6 months.

Having the COVID 19 vaccination

Getting vaccinated is the most important thing you and your family can do to help us stop the virus. As well as all those 18 years and over, vaccination is now being offered to those aged 16 and 17 years. They can get their vaccine at several places across the city with or without an appointment. You can find further details on vaccination sites here:

www.bit.ly/sheffvaccination

If you haven't booked your own vaccination or haven't had your second dose, please arrange to do so as soon as you can. You can book online at www.nhs.uk/covid-vaccination or call 119 free of charge to make an appointment.

I would encourage everyone to continue to get tested if you have symptoms and to self-isolate. Keep washing hands regularly and wear a face covering in enclosed spaces. We know these measures work.

Thank you for your patience as we move into this new phase. I know the last year has been difficult for everyone but hopefully we can look forward to a less disruptive year ahead. However, COVID has not gone away and we will continue to see cases. I want to reassure you that the Local Authority Public Health Team and Public Health England will be prioritising working closely with all settings to help manage any outbreaks. We will do everything we can to keep our children and communities safe whilst maintaining their education and face to face learning.

Yours sincerely



Greg Fell
Director of Public Health, Sheffield