

Public Health Service

Kuiama Thompson
Interim Director of Public Health and Wellbeing

**Rochdale Borough Council Floor
3, Number One Riverside, Smith
Street,
Rochdale
OL16 1XU**

Phone: 01706 927087
www.rochdale.gov.uk

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Public Health Advice to parents and carers of children at Rochdale schools

Dear Parents/Carers,

We are writing to update you on the latest position in relation to Covid cases and transmission in our schools and colleges. The number of positive cases in school aged children continues to increase, although very few become very ill or need hospitalisation.

Recently, there has been a significant increase of Covid19 cases in Rochdale. This is particularly evident in our school-aged children, but we are also starting to see rates increase in parents and grandparents, and hospitalisations are also starting to increase.

The council's education team, public health and our schools have worked closely together to continue to keep children safe and avoid the need to send any full classes or year group's home with a clear ambition to minimise the continued disruption to children's education.

Therefore, we feel introducing a some additional measures in schools could help ensure that our children and young people can continue to receive education in as normal a way as possible, have minimal impact on education and are effective at reducing risk of transmission.

Face Coverings

Secondary Schools, colleges and all staff

From Monday 1st November, Rochdale schools will be asking secondary and college aged children and all staff to wear face coverings when moving around the school and in communal areas. Face coverings lower the risk of spreading the virus to others

where an individual has the virus but does not have symptoms. Students will not need to wear face coverings whilst sat at their desks, eating or whilst outside.

If your child is exempt from wearing a face covering, they may want to consider wearing a face visor or shield.

Transport

We would strongly recommend that children who use public transport (trains, trams and buses) wear a face covering during their journey. Face coverings are also important when car sharing with people they do not live with. Please also encourage your children to sanitise their hands at the beginning and end of every journey.

Testing

For close contacts and household contacts

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

We recently requested that all secondary aged students identified as contacts take part in daily LFD testing as a temporary measure. As current case rates are still very high, we are extending this until the end of term and requesting that primary aged pupils who are not exempt also take part.

We are therefore asking that all students and staff members **identified as a close contact within the setting or a household contact** to undertake the following:

- **Take daily lateral flow tests (LFD test) before coming into school for 10 days** (*unless exempt – see exemptions below*)
- **Close contacts are also advised to take a PCR test between day 3 and 5 after being identified as a contact**

In all cases, students should continue to attend school or college provided they have a negative LFD test result.

Students or staff who develop symptoms of COVID-19 must still remain at home and get a PCR test as soon as possible, and isolate until the result is available.

Exemptions to Daily Contact Testing:

- Children 5 and under
- Children in Key Stage 1
- SEND schools
- Any child, aged between 5 – 16, who has tested positive for COVID-19 via a PCR test

- within the past 90 days
- 12 to 18 year olds who have had at least one dose of the vaccine more than 14 days ago**

Routine LFD testing

We strongly recommend that parents/carers of secondary aged children support them to test at home twice a week using LFD tests. Please encourage them to register their results, even when negative. This helps to pick up the infection early and prevents further spread of the virus.

Please remember;

- If your child has a positive LFD result, they must start isolating, take a PCR test and inform school.
- If your child tests negative, they can continue attending school.

If your child develops symptoms of COVID-19, they must remain at home and get a PCR test as soon as possible, and isolate until the result is available. It is important that people with COVID-19 symptoms take a PCR test to confirm rather than a LFD test.

How to stop COVID-19 spreading

There are things we can do to help reduce the risk of catching the virus:

- Wash your hands with soap and water often – do this for at least 20 seconds
- Use hand sanitiser if soap and water are not available
- Wash your hands as soon as you get home
- Cover your nose and mouth 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 here: www.nhs.uk/get-tested
- Have the COVID-19 vaccination if eligible, ensuring that you have both doses if you are over 16

For more information:

Please visit: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-COVID-19/>

For information on local services and support, visit <http://www.rochdale.gov.uk/coronavirus>

We understand how disappointing and frustrating this is to you. But implementing the above measures will help us to reduce transmission in education settings, without having to introduce additional measures that can have a negative impact on the education and wellbeing of children and young people. Your support with this will help

us to keep people safe over winter and reduce the number of COVID-19 infections in the borough.

Thank you for your support.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kuiama Thompson". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping tail on the letter "n".

Kuiama Thompson
Interim Director of Public Health and Wellbeing