

28th November 2021

Dear Parent/ Carer,

A new COVID-19 variant of concern has been identified in the UK amidst high local infection rates. Concerns are that the new variant, called Omicron, can spread more quickly and may be more likely to cause reinfections of COVID-19. It is essential we act now to stop infections spreading in our homes, schools and communities.

From today, the Department for Education states, '**face coverings should be worn in communal areas in all settings for Year 7 and above by staff, visitors and pupils or students**', unless they are exempt. Pupils or students (in year 7 or above) should also continue to wear face coverings on **public and dedicated school transport**, unless exempt.

Parents and carers, staff and visitors should wear face coverings both inside and around school premises where social distancing cannot be maintained such as **pick up and drop off** times. This guidance is further to the Liverpool Health Protection Board recommendations issued in October 2021.

Testing

In order to reduce any further impact on schools leading into Christmas, it is essential that eligible students continue to test weekly using the lateral flow devices provided to students by their schools. Testing helps identify cases early, and therefore reduces the likelihood of COVID-19 spreading within schools. Please make sure students are testing regularly (twice weekly), and report the results on the government website.

Vaccination

We must do everything we can to reduce both the current variants and any new variants from spreading through schools. All eligible adults and students aged 12 and over are strongly encouraged to take up the offer of the vaccine, including boosters.

Vaccines are our best defence against COVID-19. There has been some coverage in the media suggesting that the Omicron variant may be less responsive to the vaccine. The evidence on this is still emerging, but even if the vaccine is less responsive it will still help to protect young people and adults, and benefit those around them. Vaccination makes people less likely to catch the virus and less likely to pass it on. Any parents whose children have missed the opportunity to be

vaccinated as part of the school vaccination programme will be able to book a vaccine [here](#).

Contact tracing and the Omicron Variant

All individuals who have been identified as a close contact of a suspected or confirmed case of the Omicron variant of COVID-19, regardless of vaccination status and age, will be contacted directly by NHS Test and Trace and required to self-isolate immediately and asked to book a PCR test.

We appreciate everything you are doing to help us with this and thank you once again for your continued support.

Yours Sincerely

Matt Ashton

Director of Public Health, Liverpool

Steve Reddy

Director of Children's Service, Liverpool

Key actions people can take to keep themselves and their communities safe

- Get vaccinated
- Get your booster when it's your turn
<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/coronavirus-vaccination/coronavirus-booster-vaccine/>
- Continue to test regularly – with lateral flow tests
- Wear face coverings in communal areas and when advised / appropriate to do so
- Wear face coverings on public and school transport
- Maximise ventilation
- Maintain good hygiene – wash hands with soap and water or use hand sanitiser
- Self-isolate if not well with covid symptoms, and get PCR test asap
- Self-isolate if asked by NHS Test and Trace