

Date: 31 October 2021

Dear parents and carers

### COVID Measures Update

Thank you so much for your support during what has been an unprecedented and very challenging year and a half. We are grateful for the help of our parents and carers in trying to limit the impact of COVID on our schools and communities.

You will have seen recently on the news that cases across the country are rising. Much as we would all like it to be, the pandemic isn't over. We are also seeing significant increases in infections in Wakefield District with rates across the district around 500 per 100,000 people. Infections in school age children are even higher, with rates of infection in 5-16 year olds currently standing at over 1,200/100,000. In secondary schools, the rate is over 2000/100,000, which means that more than 1 in every 50 secondary school children in Wakefield District currently has COVID.

Unfortunately, we are now also seeing rising rates in adults, who are more vulnerable to the effects of the virus. This increase in COVID-19 cases in adults in Wakefield is almost certainly driven by children, who are catching it in schools and passing it on to their families and friends.

Local rates of infection in people over 60, who are more vulnerable to severe illness, remain high and are also starting to increase. Even if adults are not ill enough to need hospital care, many are absent from work because they have caught COVID from their children, or because they need to care for unwell children – this includes many of our teaching and support staff too.

In light of these rapid increases in cases across the local area, the local public health teams have asked that schools implement additional measures to try to limit spread of the virus.

So from 1 November, when pupils return after half term, we will be making the following changes to our COVID arrangements:

**1. If someone in the household has tested positive for COVID-19 (on LFD or PCR), other children in the household should stay at home for at least three days**

Until now we have been following government guidance that children living in households with someone who has tested positive for COVID-19 can come into school as long as they have no symptoms themselves, although we have recommended that they take a PCR test.

From 1 November, we are asking that these children remain at home for the first 3-5 days after someone in their household tests positive. If during this time the pupil develops symptoms, you should arrange a PCR test for them straight away. If they don't have symptoms, please arrange for them to take a PCR test 3-5 days after the household member started with symptoms (or took their test if they had no symptoms). If this test is negative, the child can return to school. If positive, they should isolate as it says in the government guidance.

Some children are exempt from this advice:

- 12–16-year-olds who have had at least one dose of the vaccine more than 14 days ago
- Any child aged between 5–16 who has tested positive for COVID-19 via a PCR test within the past 90 days.

Parents/carers who still want their child to continue to attend school have the right for them to do so but we hope that most parents will understand the reasons behind the request and will feel able to support the school to reduce the risk of other pupils and staff in school catching the virus and spreading it further.

If at any point a child develops COVID-19 symptoms, we ask parents/carers to please keep them at home and seek a PCR test. Please remember that the Delta variant does sometimes present with non-traditional symptoms, especially in children, so if you are at all unsure, do arrange a test.

**2. Use of face coverings in communal areas by staff, visitors and secondary-age pupils**

This is not mandatory, but we are strongly encouraging all secondary pupils and adults in Trust schools to consider wearing a face covering in corridors, communal areas, on public and school transport and in other places outside classrooms where large groups are in close contact.

**3. Ensure windows are open in the classroom** to facilitate good ventilation, as much as is practicable.

**4. Wherever possible, limit visitors to the school** and consider carefully whether events that bring parents / carers into the school can be managed safely or should return to online.

**5. Carefully consider whether educational trips and residential visits should go ahead.** This is especially important because being on transport together for long periods, and/or sharing overnight accommodation, increases the chance of transmitting COVID-19.

On top of the measures that we are taking in school, there are some things you can do to help:

- Continue to support your child to undertake lateral flow testing twice a week if they attend Airedale Academy
- Support your child to wear a face covering if they attend secondary school, both in school and in enclosed indoor spaces in public.
- Consider the benefits of the vaccination programme for children between the ages of 12-15.
- If you or your child develop symptoms of COVID-19 book a free NHS test as soon as possible ([www.gov.uk/get-coronavirus-test](http://www.gov.uk/get-coronavirus-test)). You can also phone 119. Stay at home until it is time to take your test.

We understand the above will be frustrating to some of you, and welcome to others. Like you, we want your children in school and having as full an educational experience as possible. However, we believe that the best way of achieving this is to take simple measures that will hopefully keep the number of cases in school to a minimum, and reduce the pressure on our local health and social care services. Thank you once again for your support.

Yours faithfully



**Elizabeth Fairhurst**

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Northern Ambition Academies Trust