

05/01/2022

Dear Parents and Carers

Happy New Year! I hope you had a lovely break and were able to spend some quality time with your families.

As we begin a new term, I wanted to provide you with an update on the mitigations that remain in place in our schools to keep our staff, children and young people safe from COVID-19.

The Scottish Government published updated guidance on 21 December.

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-on-reducing-the-risks-in-schools/>

The guidance continues to emphasise the need for a range of measures to keep schools safe including:

- a reintroduction of groupings/'bubbles' indoors where practical (to be decided on a school by school basis)
- tightened restrictions on school visitors, including parent councils always taking place remotely
- the processes to be followed when distributing test kits – making it quicker and easier for school staff to issue testing kits to pupils
- a strengthened approach to self-isolation for high risk / household contacts, who are required to self-isolate for 10 days regardless of age, vaccination status or a negative PCR result.

The guidance also stresses **maximum** compliance with all current measures such as appropriate physical distancing, one-way systems, asymptomatic testing, and the correct use of face-coverings to help to reduce transmission.

Remote Learning

I am sure that we will all continue to do what we can to limit the spread of COVID-19 and the potential disruption to learning. However, due to the continued impact of self-isolation across our schools including teaching and support staff, cleaners and home to school transport, some classes or year groups will at times have to be moved to remote learning. Schools will give parents and carers as much notice as possible about this. If you are concerned about your ability to access any materials during temporary periods of remote learning, please speak to your school in advance.

Lunches

As the new guidance was released after East Lothian schools closed for the break and our catering staff were on leave, a decision was made to resume lunches in primary school classrooms pending any change to permitted groupings. This means that packed lunches and hot snacks will be served until 21 January. A further update will be given by your school in week beginning 17 January.

Ventilation in classrooms

Parents and carers are asked to continue to ensure that children and young people attend school with adequate layers of clothing to keep warm. Windows and doors will continue to be used to provide effective classroom ventilation as a key mitigation against the spread of the virus.

Home to school transport

There is no further change to the mitigations in place on our home to school transport. We would again like to remind all families that face coverings must be worn at all times during travel and hand sanitiser should be used. This ensures the safety of all passengers and drivers and will avoid potential disruption to our home to school transport services.

Asymptomatic Testing

We continue to promote twice-weekly at-home LFD testing to staff and secondary pupils.

Vaccination programme

Latest information about the NHS Lothian vaccination programme including details for those under 18 and the location of clinics can be found here <https://www.nhsllothian.scot/Coronavirus/Vaccine>

New Self-Isolation Guidance

Yesterday, the First Minister outlined new guidance for self-isolation and the use of PCR tests following a positive Lateral Flow result. These changes are for people who were told to isolate on or after 6 January and is not retrospective.

Find out more from the NHS Inform website including an online tool which will tell you how long you need to self-isolate for based on your vaccination status and the nature of your contact with a covid case. [Visit the NHS Inform website.](#)

Reporting cases

If your child or young person is showing signs of COVID-19 please do not send them to school. Inform the school office of their absence in the usual way then self-isolate following guidance from NHS and Test and Protect. Please also inform covidinschools@eastlothian.gov.uk or call 01875 613921.

As we know, the Omicron variant of COVID-19 spreads easily, and the above guidance will support us to minimise risk in our schools. We appreciate your support with adhering to the guidance and encouraging your child or young person to do so too.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Nicola McDowell', enclosed within a light grey rectangular border.

Nicola McDowell
Head of Education Services