

Dear Parent / Carer,

The approach to COVID-19 in school-aged children is to maximise children's access to education. As you are aware, children are very unlikely to become seriously ill with a COVID-19 infection, but they do need to self-isolate if they are infected. Whilst self-isolating, they miss out on the benefit of in-school education. It is therefore extremely important that we try to limit the spread of COVID-19 within a school setting to maximise school attendance at all times.

We have seen COVID-19 infections in primary school-aged children in Essex increasing over the past few weeks. At this rate, it is expected that some primary schools could see significant numbers of pupils infected with COVID-19. Throughout the pandemic, regular household testing has been encouraged, but we would now like to strengthen that advice for primary age children.

From this half term, to help limit the spread of the infection within primary schools we are asking you to:

- Support your primary school child, if you are not already doing so, to undertake twice-weekly lateral flow device tests.
- Be alert to COVID-19 symptoms in your child (high temperature, new continuous cough, or loss of sense of smell or taste).
- Encourage good hand hygiene within your household.

Whilst we understand this is different guidance for some of you, we would strongly encourage you to begin this practice as a family, excluding any child/ren under the age of 2. This will ensure that as much asymptomatic infection as possible is picked up and will help schools to continue to operate at full capacity and minimise the spread of infection through the school and wider community. You can collect test kits from your nearest pharmacy using one of the new collect codes which can be downloaded from <https://test-for-coronavirus.service.gov.uk/collect-lateral-flow-kits>. You can then hand this into your local pharmacy, who will provide you with test kits. You can also collect test kits from your local library or order them online via this link: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/testing/regular-rapid-coronavirus-tests-if-you-do-not-have-symptoms/>.

If a positive result is returned, your child/young person will need to seek a confirmatory PCR test and isolate for 10 days according to national guidance. If the PCR test is negative, your child can return to school if they are well enough to do so. More information about lateral flow testing can be found here: [Regular Rapid Lateral Flow Coronavirus \(Covid-19\) Tests](#).

We appreciate that the changes in guidance can cause anxiety for some, but it is important that the education of our children and young people is prioritised this academic year. The likelihood of serious illness in children is extremely low and after 18 months of serious disruption, the DfE and the Local Authority are committed to ensuring that all children and young people in Essex have every opportunity to catch up and exceed their potential.

Best wishes,



Clare Kershaw
Director of Education
Essex County Council



Mike Gogarty
Director of Public Health and Wellbeing
Essex County Council