

24 August 2021

People Directorate
Westfields
Middlewich Road
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Cheshire
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Dear Parent/Carer

RE: PREPARATIONS FOR THE NEW SCHOOL/COLLEGE YEAR

We look forward to welcoming all children and young people back to school or college in September and have been working with education settings to ensure they have the appropriate arrangements in place to do this.

We hope the information below is helpful in assuring you about the arrangements that will be in place from September as these will have changed since before the school holidays. This sets out the plans to cautiously and gradually reduce the measures in place across education settings.

Tracing Close Contacts and Isolations

It is great news that as pupils return to school or college in September, under the new national arrangements, there will be no need for them to isolate if they are a close contact of someone who has tested positive for COVID-19. This should keep more pupils in school/college, continuing their education and means that parents do not need to put childcare plans in place. Instead, only pupils who are positive will isolate and their close contacts and/or their families will receive a letter advising them to undertake more regular home testing and/or go for a more accurate PCR test. It continues to be important that you do not send your child into school should they develop COVID-19 symptoms, however mild.

Asymptomatic Testing

Secondary schools are planning to carry out two lateral flow device tests for every pupil in year 7 and above, 3 to 5 days apart, on their return in the autumn term. Although this may result in a slightly delayed return, we have asked schools and colleges to minimise delays as much as possible. As this is a significant logistical task, please follow the guidance provided to you by your school/college.

Shielding for Vulnerable Pupils

The national requirement for vulnerable pupils to shield was removed some time ago. We are aware that some families have continued to shield their children. Whilst we appreciate this will be an anxious time, we want to assure you that measures will be in place to support you and your child to enable them to return to their education from September.

As schools will be returning to their usual absence procedures in such cases, it is important that you speak to them to discuss any concerns or, if you prefer, you can contact Cheshire East Council on CESchoolattendance@cheshireeast.gov.uk.

School Transport

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, we received additional funding to enable us to reduce the number of pupils on school transport vehicles. This government funding has now ceased so additional buses and taxi services will no longer be in place. However, the government guidance recommends that children and young people aged 11 and over continue to wear a face covering when travelling to secondary school or college. For vulnerable children where transport has changed, meet and greet arrangements have been taking place. If you are unsure about arrangements for your child's school transport, please contact Transport Services Solutions (TSS) on schooltransport@transport-services.co.uk

Risk Assessments

In line with the national lifting of restrictions and new government guidance, we have been working with schools and colleges on what measures will need to be in place from September. Every school/college has carried out a risk assessment based on national and local guidance and put in place measures to reduce the risks from COVID-19. These may be more cautious over the first half term, as we believe this will provide reassurance for many children and parents. We will continue to monitor the impact of changes to isolation rules on positive cases and use this to inform the pace at which we advise the removal of further measures.

In general, the following are some of the measures that will be in place:

- Good hygiene and ventilation will be key measures that all schools/colleges MUST continue to have in place.
- Pupils who are close contacts will not be required to self-isolate and can still attend school.
- Some one-way systems may be retained and some social distancing between staff and pupils may continue
- Some staggered start and finish times and breaks may stay in place
- Pupils should NOT be expected to wear face coverings in classrooms or communal areas (unless the school has an outbreak situation)
- Pupils will be recommended to wear face coverings on school transport (except those who are exempt)
- Schools and colleges will no longer be required to have all desks facing forward.
- There will no longer be a need to keep to strict bubbles, although it is likely that schools/colleges will gradually increase the number of pupils mixing in large groups indoors.

The above are just examples as every school/college will respond to their individual situation, removing measures gradually and informed by the local data. We hope this approach assures you as parents that the appropriate safety measures will still be in place.

Outbreak Management Plans

All schools and colleges will have a contingency plan (or outbreak management plan) describing what they would do if children or staff test positive for COVID-19, or how they would operate if they were advised to reintroduce any additional measures to help break chains of transmission. This would include, for example, measures such as requesting pupils in year 7 and above to have a PCR test or for pupils and family members to undertake more frequent (ideally daily) home testing.

It remains more likely that COVID transmission will take place in the community than in schools and colleges, so you may wish to consider the continued use face coverings in indoor crowded spaces and practice good hygiene routines, wherever possible.

Vaccinations for Young People

Vaccinations are a key measure in the government's plan to reduce the risks of COVID-19. We encourage all those eligible to take up the vaccine offer as soon as possible.

You may be aware that vaccinations will now be available for those aged 16 plus. Also, in line with [government guidance](#), young people aged 12 years and over with specific underlying health conditions that put them at an increased risk of serious COVID-19, or who live with a person who is immunosuppressed, are eligible for vaccination. Those who are eligible will be identified and will receive an information letter with instructions on getting a vaccine. We encourage everyone invited to get vaccinated as soon as they are contacted.

Finally, the evidence is clear that being out of education causes significant harm to educational attainment, life chances, mental and physical health. Please let's ensure that together we support our children and young people to get back to school/college as soon as possible.

We understand that testing and vaccinations are a personal choice and if you have any queries, the latest information on COVID-19 can be found on Cheshire East's website at www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/covid19. If you have any queries on the content of this letter or the arrangements from September, please contact your school/college direct as we will be unable to respond to your individual queries and they are best placed to be able to support you.

Yours sincerely



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Director of Education



Dr Matt Tyrer
Director of Public Health