



Public Health and Wellbeing

**Third Floor Arndale House
37 The Mall
Luton
LU1 2LJ**

Tel: 01582 548450
Mobile: 07721880544

e-mail: sally.cartwright@luton.gov.uk
www.luton.gov.uk

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Dear Colleague,

Coronavirus, Schools and Early Years Settings

Firstly I want to yet again thank all of the staff working in schools and on Boards of Governors for the dedication shown over the last months in responding to the range of very significant challenges that have arisen because of the pandemic.

As you know, we all share an ambition to ensure we can keep children and our valuable school staff in schools as safely as possible. We are writing, following the announcements by Government last week on Covid-19 control measures.

Government updated its guidance on Education and Early Years settings on 19th January and this can be found here [Contingency framework: education and childcare settings \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/104444/contingency-framework-education-and-childcare-settings).

The key measures of note are:

1. Those measures which were part of the Government's "Plan B" are being lifted:
 - a. From 20th January, face coverings are no longer required in classrooms in secondary schools
 - b. From 27th January, face coverings will no longer be required in communal areas
2. The roll out of vaccination to clinically vulnerable children aged 0-11 and 12-17 means that shielding for most children is no longer needed

Although infections from the Omicron wave are declining nationally, we are seeing a slower decline locally and this decline is not yet being seen in school settings. So, locally we are asking all of our residents to remain vigilant and take basic measures to protect themselves and others to reduce the spread of the virus, while continuing with their normal lives. For example, regular hand washing, continuing to wear face covering in crowded settings, taking regular tests before meeting people, and meeting outside or in places which are well ventilated where possible.

Luton

Cases in school settings mean disruption to education, challenges in roll out of vaccination, and risk of infection in staff and therefore implications on the running of the school.

For these reasons, and aligned with the contingency framework which allows specific advice depending on the local situation, we **strongly advise the continuation of wearing of face coverings in communal areas by visitors, staff and secondary age students in all schools.**

This will be reviewed again at half term, with further epidemiological data available to us.

In addition to this measure (Additional Measures A1), as before, all baseline measures as laid out in our schools plan should continue to be followed:

- **B1 - Strongly encourage pupils to undertake twice weekly LFD testing** (staff and secondary aged or above pupils only)
Twice weekly LFDs in pupils and staff of secondary schools is absolutely vital not only to minimise the entry of people infectious with COVID-19 from entering school but also to ensure that asymptomatic people are identified. It is likely that infection levels are higher than the data currently suggests due to relatively low levels of testing.
- **B2 - Ongoing and consistent cleaning of frequently touched surfaces**
- **B3 - Keep occupied spaces well ventilated and use CO2 monitors as they become available**
We are aware that many schools may not yet have received their CO2 monitors. While they are on their way we strongly encourage schools to maximise ventilation and to permit the wearing of appropriate extra clothing to permit this, even where it is not strictly within existing uniform regulations. Schools should alert parents to the need for extra layers of clothing and should have some available for children who do not bring their own.
- **B4 - Strong messaging about signs and symptoms of COVID-19**
- **B5 - Promote vaccination uptake for eligible students and staff.** This is an important aspect of our strategy to reduce the spread and impact of COVID-19 infections in our schools. Vaccines remain the best public health measure to protect people from COVID-19, slow transmission, and reduce the likelihood of new variants emerging. COVID-19 vaccines are highly effective at preventing severe illness, hospitalizations, and death.

Vaccination rates in Luton continue to be lower than the National average, and this is particularly apparent in younger age cohorts.

Please promote the vaccination programme in your schools, walk in vaccination offer for all over 12s is now available both at Redgrave and The Old Post Office in the Mall. Vaccination materials are enclosed.

The school vaccination service may also be conducting second visits to schools, please do all you can to help maximise the number of students that can be vaccinated if this does happen in your school.

- **B6 - Promote daily LFD testing for close or household contacts (identified by NHS Test and Trace)**

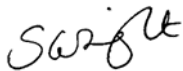
This measure was recently introduced nationally and locally in Luton, on the back of evidence from trials showing it to be an effective way of limiting spread in close and household contacts of COVID-19 cases. However, it is only effective if people comply. Schools have an important role in encouraging and convincing parents to comply with this advice and developing creative ways to incentivise and reward compliance.

Schools may step up further measures as part of the contingency framework, depending on individual outbreak situations, for example: Social distancing and reduce crowding (eg, staggered start and end times); face coverings in classrooms for staff and secondary pupils; limiting school trips, open days, transition/taster days, parental attendance, live performances.

Please contact C19EducationEnquiries@luton.gov.uk for outbreak management advice. A quick response can help prevent onward spread.

Many thanks for your continued support in helping fight this pandemic.

Yours sincerely



Sally Cartwright
Director of Public Health