

11 January 2022

Dear parents and guardians,

I hope you are well. As the new term gets underway, I wanted to provide you with an update on Omicron and request your support in keeping as many children in school as possible for face-to-face education whilst managing the public health risks. Omicron is still highly prevalent in Lancashire, leading to staff absences and rising hospital admissions, and includes the indirect impacts of disruption to education and on children's mental health, which is why it is imperative that we all play our part in mitigating the impacts of Covid-19 on our children.

As you will be aware, the Government is temporarily recommending that face coverings are worn in classrooms and teaching spaces for students in year 7 or above. It is important to emphasise that this is a temporary measure that has been taken in response to the huge number of Covid-19 cases driven by the Omicron variant. It will be in place until the 26 January, when Plan B regulations are scheduled to expire, at which point it will be reviewed.

The Government has also asked all secondary schools to provide one on-site test for pupils ahead of their return to the classroom this term to help reduce the transmission of Covid-19. This will help boost testing participation, identify positive cases, and reduce transmission after a period of social mixing during the holidays. Secondary, college and university students should continue to test themselves twice a week. Pupils and staff may be asked to test more frequently in the event of an outbreak.

From January 11, people in England who test positive with a lateral flow device (LFD) won't be required to take a confirmatory PCR test. This is another temporary measure while Covid-19 rates remain high across the UK. Because the rates are so high, the vast majority of people with positive LFD results can be confident they have the virus. If your child or anyone in your household tests positive, make sure you follow the Government's [Stay at Home guidance](#).

Our public health team is continuing working in partnership with the schools to prevent and manage outbreaks. Proportionate safety measures will also remain in schools, colleges and universities to help reduce the transmission of the virus, including increased ventilation.

Vaccination is still effective against Omicron in reducing severe illness and deaths. If you or your child is eligible for vaccination but haven't had it yet, I would strongly encourage you to book your appointment by visiting <https://www.healthierlsc.co.uk/getmyjab>

Thank you for your continued support and patience during these challenging times.

Yours sincerely



Dr Sakthi Karunanithi
Director of Public Health