

13 July 2021

Step 4 Changes and the last week of summer term

Dear Parent/Carer,

Changes from 19 July

From 19 July national Covid-19 restrictions have been eased under step 4 of the government's roadmap out of lockdown. While community transmission of the virus remains high locally, it is sensible that we take a careful approach over the coming week to protect the health and wellbeing of our pupils and staff. We are working with education leaders and the public health team from Newcastle City Council and are advising that we keep the current Covid-19 control measures in place for the remainder of the Summer term.

It is important to remember that your child **should not attend** school if they are showing Covid-19 symptoms or if there is a positive case within the household.

Contact tracing and isolation

Under the new guidance, from 19 July, your child's school is no longer responsible for identifying and contacting pupils who have been in close contact with someone in school who has tested positive for Covid-19.

This means that if your child is required to isolate you will be notified by either the national NHS Test and Trace team or a local team working on behalf of the NHS rather than by the school.

NHS test and trace will contact you directly on the result of a positive case and discuss any potential close contacts and offer support and advice.

Up until July 19th, your child's school will continue to advise close contacts to isolate for ten days. We appreciate that this may be frustrating and take the isolation period past the date for new guidance. Please be patient with staff as they are doing their best and following national Public Health guidance.

From **16 August**, anyone under the age of 18, or adults who are double vaccinated for at least 14 days, will not be required to isolate if they are identified as a close contact of a positive case. They will however be advised to take a PCR test and, if that is positive, they and their household must follow the public health guidance.

Bubbles

The new guidance allows schools to keep certain Covid-19 control measures – such as bubbles and staggered start and finish times – in place for the remainder of the summer term. Public Health advice is that we **keep** these measures in place during the final week of term.

We know that this may mean disappointment due to some changes to end of term activities but with high case rates in the city it is important that your child's school

continues to take these precautionary measures to reduce the risk of the virus spreading and minimise potential holiday disruption.

We hope that by keeping these control measures in place it will help to protect pupils, staff and their families and avoid people being ill or having to isolate in the holidays.

Face coverings

Face coverings are no longer required for pupils, staff and visitors in either classrooms or communal areas but can be worn if any individual chooses to continue to wear one.

While pupils are no longer recommended to wear a face covering on dedicated school transport, most public transport operators (including Nexus which operates the Metro) are requesting passengers to continue wearing a face covering.

There might be occasions that measures such as face coverings could be re-introduced. For example, as part of a suite of measures resulting from an Outbreak Control Team review if there had been increased cases within a school.

Following Public Health Advice for Testing and Self Isolation

Following public health guidance, if your child is identified by NHS Test and Trace as being a close contact with an affected case then the current procedures must still be followed. In line with national guidance your child must now stay at home and self-isolate until they have completed a 10 day period. In this time your child **must not** go to school, holiday activities or to public areas: the child must remain at home and must not mix with anyone outside of their household.

Individuals who have been in contact with someone who's tested positive can now access a free PCR test at <https://www.gov.uk/get-coronavirus-test> or by calling 119 (free of charge).

Public Health teams from Newcastle City Council and Public Health England are working to detect further cases of Covid-19, limit its onward spread and reduce the impact it may have on local communities. **We would therefore advise that your child takes a PCR test before the end of their period of self-isolation if identified.** They should do this even if they have returned a negative Lateral Flow Device (LFD) test during the period of their self-isolation. However, they should not take a PCR test if they have previously received a positive PCR test result in the last 90 days, unless they develop any new symptoms of COVID-19. This is because it is possible for PCR tests to remain positive for some time after COVID-19 infection.

This additional testing will help to reduce any possible transmission over the summer period and reassure you and your child. This precautionary approach will allow us to detect any additional cases within the wider community and reduce possible transmission.

If a negative test is recorded, then your child will be able to end isolation and attend holiday activities when their **full** period of self-isolation is complete.

If the PCR test result is positive, the whole household must self-isolate and follow the advice of NHS Test and Trace.

Support to Self-Isolate

If you need support with self-isolation Newcastle City Council's Welfare and Wellbeing Team may be able to help you. If you can, you should try to seek help from your friends, family and community first, or look online at www.newcastle.gov.uk for local support services. Where this is not possible, the Welfare and Wellbeing team can help.

Visit www.newcastle.gov.uk/welfare or call 0800 170 7001 (8am-8pm Monday to Friday, 9am-3pm Saturday) to get the support you need.

You may also be entitled to a Test and Trace Support Payment. Apply online at <https://newcastle.gov.uk/TestandTraceSupportPayments> (available until the 30 September 2021 only).

If only your child is instructed to self-isolate, and does not have symptoms within their self-isolation period, then other members of your household can continue normal activities

What to do if your child develops symptoms of COVID-19

For most people, especially children, COVID-19 will be a mild illness.

The most common symptoms of COVID-19 are:

- a new continuous cough and/or
- high temperature and/or
- a loss of, or change in, normal sense of taste or smell (anosmia)

If your child develops any of these symptoms of COVID-19, they must remain at home for at least 10 days from the date their symptoms first started. You need to arrange for them to have another PCR test for COVID-19.

To book a test, either call 119 or go to the NHS website at www.nhs.uk/ask-for-a-coronavirus-test

At that time all other household members must also stay at home, not go to work, school or public areas, even for exercise.

When the result of the child's test is known, further advice will be given.

How to stop COVID-19 spreading

Although restrictions are easing there are things you can do to help reduce the risk of you and anyone you live with getting ill with COVID-19:

Remember; '**Hands, Face, Space and Let Fresh Air In**':

- Wash your hands with soap and water often – do this for at least 20 seconds or use hand sanitiser gel if soap and water are not available.
- Wash your hands as soon as you get home.
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue or your sleeve (not your hands) when you cough or sneeze.
- Put used tissues in the bin immediately and wash your hands afterwards.
- Try to stay at least 2 metres from anyone you don't live with.
- Use a face covering when social distancing is not possible.
- If meeting others, try to do so outside. If inside, open the window to let fresh air in

You, the adults and secondary age children you live with, are encouraged to take part in twice weekly Lateral Flow Device (LFD) testing for COVID-19. This helps to identify those who do not have symptoms of the virus and helps prevent it spreading to others. You can get free LFD test kits from most pharmacies or by ringing 119 or online at <https://www.gov.uk/order-coronavirus-rapid-lateral-flow-tests>

All those over the age of 18 can now get a COVID-19 vaccine. Please take up the offer of the vaccine. They are safe and effective. They give you the best protection against COVID-19. There are locations across the city where you can be vaccinated, either by having an appointment or by visiting a drop-in service. Visit www.newcastle.gov.uk/covidvaccine

Further information

Further information is available at www.nhs.uk/coronavirus

Thank you for your support. Your efforts do help to reduce the further spread of COVID-19 to others in the community.

Yours sincerely

Newcastle City Council Public Health team
Newcastle City Council Education and Skills team