

Date: 2nd September 2021

Dear Secondary School/College Parent/Carer,

As it is the start of the 2021/22 academic year, we wanted to write to all parents to welcome our children back, to provide further information about COVID-19 safety measures in place for the new academic year, and to reassure parents about the support available for schools where cases of COVID-19 are identified. We have also included the answer to some 'FAQs' you may have.

What is the current situation in Wigan?

We know that, due to vaccination, people who contract COVID-19 are now less likely to become seriously ill or require hospitalisation. The vaccination programme in Wigan continues to be successful. 71% of residents have been vaccinated with their first dose, and 63% vaccinated with their second dose. Residents aged 16 and over can now receive their first dose, and a number of 12-15 year old residents who are eligible for vaccination are also being invited for vaccination.

The evidence also continues to show that children and young people are much less at risk of serious illness and hospitalisation from COVID-19 than adults are.

Having a vaccine doesn't necessarily mean that an individual will not contract or transmit COVID-19, and therefore it is critical that we continue taking precautions to protect ourselves and others.

There continues to be a high prevalence of COVID-19 across Wigan, at 288.2 cases per 100,000 people, which is close to both the rate in Greater Manchester, the North West, and England. Although this has reduced from the significantly high rates we saw in June, at present we are not seeing any further reduction in cases. More detail can be obtained from the Council's weekly Covid-19 [surveillance tracker](#).

Schools/colleges and school/college leaders have a duty to ensure their setting is as safe as possible and they will follow Government and local public health advice and guidance in doing so. They will have a risk assessment and will be regularly reviewing and updating their safety measures.

Settings will be in contact with parents to advise them of the safety measures in place at their setting. These measures will be likely to be different from setting to setting and will be based on that individual school's circumstances and the risk assessment in place. It is therefore really important that parents and pupils/students continue to follow any safety measures they are asked to by their school or college. This includes:

- Not attending school/college if you have symptoms of COVID-19, or have had a positive test.
- If asked to by either your school/college or NHS Test and Trace as a close contact, taking a PCR test to confirm if you have COVID-19.

- If asked to by your school/college, carry out regular LFD testing at home

What will be different in our schools/colleges?

The Government is aiming to shift the balance to learning to live with COVID-19, as more of the population is vaccinated. We know that being at school or college keeps children and young people's education on track, so they can achieve their full potential, while also benefitting their mental and physical health and wellbeing. As the evidence continues to show that children and young people are significantly at less risk of serious illness and hospitalisation from COVID-19, the Government is aiming to maximise the number of children and young people in face-to-face education, whilst minimising any disruption to their education and learning.

As a result, schools and colleges will feel different as COVID-19 measures are relaxed. Each setting's COVID-19 measures will be different and based on national guidance, their own risk assessments, and any contingency planning in place should COVID-19 cases emerge in the setting. Your school or college will be able to inform you of the safety measures that are in place.

What will happen if there are COVID-19 cases in my child's school/college?

Schools and colleges will have plans for what to do if anyone at school tests positive for COVID-19, or if additional measures are needed to be temporarily reintroduced. Schools/colleges will continue to work with Wigan Council Public Health, who will provide support to schools where there are cases of COVID-19. This may include advising schools/colleges to reintroduce specific safety measures for a temporary period. Where this happens, schools will inform parents as to any changes in the safety measures they or their pupils/students are expected to follow whilst attending school/college.

Should my child attend school?

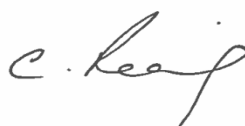
Yes, attendance is mandatory. Public Health England and the Government's Chief Medical & Scientific Officers agree that there is a very low risk and rate of severe illness in children and young people from COVID-19. The benefit of attending school or college continues to significantly outweigh the COVID-19 health risk to children and young people. If you have concerns, you should discuss these with your school/college as soon as possible so that your child is able to continue attending.

We are grateful to you for continuing to support our schools and colleges in these challenging times, and wish you and your child or young person the very best during the 2021/22 academic year.

Yours sincerely,



Professor Kate Ardern MBChB MSc FFPH
Director of Public Health



Cath Pealing
Assistant Director of Education

Secondary School/College Return to School FAQs

Does my child need to continue doing COVID-19 tests?

Yes. Secondary school and college students should test when they return at the start of term. They are advised to take two on-site rapid COVID-19 tests (3-5 days apart), followed by twice weekly testing at home. The tests are easy to do and results come back within 30 minutes.

You should report the results straight away, whether positive, negative or void, either online at www.gov.uk/report-covid19-result or by calling 119, free from your mobile or landline.

If the test is positive then the person should also take a confirmatory PCR test and follow the latest government guidance.

Around 1 in 3 people with COVID-19 have no symptoms and can spread it without knowing. Taking regular rapid tests will help give you peace of mind that your child or young person is not spreading the virus without knowing.

What should I do if my child has COVID-19 symptoms?

If your child has any of the main COVID-19 symptoms (a high temperature, a new continuous cough, or a loss or change to sense of smell or taste), they should not attend school or college and should stay at home.

You should arrange for them to get a PCR test and tell your child's school or college the test results. Your child should not attend school or college while you are waiting for test results, even if they are feeling better. If the test is negative, they should go to school or college as normal. If they test positive, they should continue to isolate and follow public health advice.

What happens if my child has been in contact with someone with COVID-19 symptoms?

If your child or young person has been identified as a close contact, you will be advised that your child takes a PCR test. They will not have to self-isolate, unless they have a positive PCR test result.

This will not apply if your young person is aged over 18 years, 6 months old and is not fully vaccinated. NHS Test and Trace will be able to advise if your young person has to isolate in these circumstances.

Will my child be vaccinated?

All 16 and 17-year-olds in England are now eligible for their first COVID-19 vaccine dose. Anyone in this age group can now find their nearest centre through the ['grab a jab'](#) NHS online walk-in finder.

The NHS will also contact 12- to 15-year-olds to receive the vaccine if they are previously considered clinically extremely vulnerable, have an underlying health condition, or may live with an individual who is immunosuppressed.

If my child was previously considered as clinically extremely vulnerable (CEV), should they attend school or college?

Yes. All young people who were considered as CEV should have returned to school or college following the end of shielding measures on 1 April 2021.

Further guidance will be given to parents of children who were previously considered clinically extremely vulnerable where necessary.

Will my child be required to continue any remote learning?

If your child is isolating due to a positive PCR test, schools and colleges will continue to implement high-quality remote education for pupils and students so that they can learn from home if they are well enough.

How will my child catch up on any lost learning?

There is lots of support available to help your child or young person catch up on any lost learning over the course of the pandemic or to boost their wellbeing.

To find out more about what's on offer and who's eligible, visit:

<https://educationcatchup.campaign.gov.uk> or speak to your child's school or college.

You may also find the below links and guidance helpful:

- To find out more about what to expect when pupils return to school or college in September, visit: www.gov.uk/backtoschool
- How to order a rapid COVID-19 test for asymptomatic testing: <https://maps.test-and-trace.nhs.uk>
- How to take a test: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/testing/how-to-do-a-test-at-home-or-at-a-test-site/how-to-do-a-rapid-lateral-flow-test/>
- How to report your rapid COVID-19 test results: <https://www.gov.uk/report-covid19-result> or call 119 (free from mobile or landline)
- How to order a PCR test if you or your child has COVID-19 symptoms: <https://www.gov.uk/get-coronavirus-test>