

Message to School Leaders from Wokingham Borough Council:

The number of positive Covid cases in school age children across the Borough is increasing. Within Wokingham the rate within 11-16 year olds has risen from 615 per 100,000 on the 13th September to 1398 per 100,000 on the 23rd September 2021. The work of the Children's Services taskforce identifies that this trend will increase over the coming weeks and many school settings are already seeing significant disruption as a result of Covid transmission within the setting.

As a result of the rise in infection rates, we have an increasing number of schools meeting the Contingency Framework Threshold for additional monitoring and support. We are keen to support our school leaders with how to undertake the difficult task of containing infection within close contact groups within the confines of the DfE operational guidance. This is of concern, and we are as keen as you are to see the majority of our young people remaining in their school/setting – but this needs to be achieved safely.

We recognise that access to asymptomatic testing in Primary school is a contributory factor, and whilst we are unable to resolve national directives such as this, as a LA we do have the ability to employ localised guidance to help minimise the spread of infection. From this week therefore, we are implementing some additional control measures for schools/settings that reach the Contingency Threshold, to increase Covid security in these environments.

Additional control measures for implementation

From Monday 4 October, if you have children that are taking a PCR test, we advise that they remain absent from school until they have a negative result. Proof of a PCR result should be emailed to your child's school office. **These absences will be authorised and not form part of any sanction action.**

If a pupil tests positive, they should continue to self-isolate in line with public health guidance.

With reference to pupils with a sibling that tests positive, we advise that the siblings (**regardless of which school they attend**), should also self-isolate until undertaking a PCR test between day 3 to 5 of the positive result. Day 0 is counted as the first day of symptoms, or if asymptomatic, then the date of the PCR test. They can then return to school if this PCR test is negative. The reason for waiting to take a sibling for a PCR test between days 3 to 5 is that if a PCR test is carried out too early, this can produce a false negative result. Proof of a PCR result should be emailed to your child's school office. **These absences will be authorised and not form part of any sanction action.**

Contingency Framework Threshold Management

As a development of the current Contingency Framework Threshold approach, as and when schools hit threshold, we may seek to mandate some of the additional measures in order to increase the Covid security. These mandates will be case specific and agreed in conjunction with the school and may include things such as:

- Wearing of face coverings
- Creation of Covid secure groups
- Staggered start/end arrangements

We expect that these measures will have a notable effect on bringing down the rate of infection, ultimately and keeping more students in school.

Carol Cammiss
Director of Children's Services

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Director of Public Health

Cllr Graham Howe
Executive Member, Children's Services