

Return to School Arrangements: September 2021

Dear Parents/Carers,

I am writing to welcome you all back to school. I hope you are all in good health and managed to enjoy the summer break with family and friends. I am sure that staff at school are ready and waiting to hear all about your break and to support you and your child at the start of this new academic year. Please keep updated with school websites and other forums over the forthcoming days and weeks.

I re-call from my days as a primary school Headteacher that the return to school can be a mixture of excitement and anxiety for parents/carers and children and I am sure this year will be no different. I know school will work with you all to make the return a positive experience, but I thought it may also be useful to send you an overview of the national guidance issued by the government at the end of August.

I know that experiences of school have changed massively over the last 18 months because of the pandemic. We have all faced new challenges and adapted to new rules and routines quickly – these things have felt difficult at times – but I have been proud of how our education community has responded and I thank you all for your efforts. I have every faith that we will continue to work well together in this new academic year.

As we move into the new term there are a number of national changes I wanted to share with you; before I get into the detail of that though it is important that I emphasise the legal requirement of schools under the Health and Safety Act 1974 to have measures in place to ensure the safety and well being of students, staff and visitors to the school – as such they can, in addition to the guidance from the government, introduce any local measures they feel are required to meet that legal duty as long as they do not compromise the quality of face to face education in school.

As a consequence of this legal duty, and the unique circumstances of each school, Head Teachers and Governing Bodies may take a different approach to implementing COVID safety measures and I know that you will support them in the decisions they make. Please remember that any systems or routines they put in place are primarily designed to keep everyone at school safe during these difficult times and will have been made as a consequence of advice from Health and Safety and/or Public Health professionals.

We know that locally our infection rates are rising; it is therefore important that we work together to implement all COVID safety measures and keep children, staff and visitors as safe as possible in our schools. If we get this right, we can make sure that our children get every opportunity to learn and achieve well, maintain good attendance at school and continue to see their friends at school.

GOVERNMENT GUIDANCE:

Symptoms:

The main symptoms of COVID-19 are:

- a new continuous cough
- fever (temperature of 37.8°C or higher)
- loss of or change in, normal sense of taste or smell (anosmia)

It is important to remember that if an individual does have just one of these symptoms they should take a test.

Changes to national self-isolation guidance

From 16 August, the Government has said that people aged under 18 years and 6 months or who are fully vaccinated (two doses) will no longer be legally required to isolate if they are a close contact of someone with COVID-19. Instead, they will be advised (but not legally required) to get a PCR test unless they have had a positive PCR test in the previous 90 days.

Regardless of age or vaccination status, anyone who develops any of the three main COVID-19 symptoms (see below) must get a PCR test as soon as possible and isolate until the result is available. People who get a positive PCR test must continue to isolate as usual (for ten days from the onset of symptoms or the date of the positive test result if no symptoms were displayed).

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

If your child develops any of these symptoms, you must arrange for them to have a PCR test as soon as possible. A PCR test can be arranged via the NHS UK (www.nhs.uk/coronavirus) website or by contacting NHS 119 via telephone if you do not have internet access.

Your child should self-isolate immediately and they should not attend school.

Please contact the school by phone to inform them your child has COVID-19 symptoms and you are awaiting a COVID-19 test.

What should I do if my child has COVID-19 confirmed by PCR test?

Anyone with COVID-19 confirmed by PCR test should self-isolate until the latest of:

- 10 days after the onset of their symptoms, or
- 10 days after their test day if they are asymptomatic

Self-isolation means staying at home - your child should not go to school, attend any out of school activities or visit a friend's house. They should not visit any public places, use public transport or go out to exercise. You should not have visitors into the home except for those providing essential care. This is to prevent others from being infected.

Please contact the school by phone and inform them that your child has COVID-19 confirmed by PCR test. It is really important you let us know if your child has confirmed COVID-19 so we can monitor the number of children with COVID-19 across the school.

What should I do if my child is a contact of someone with COVID-19 confirmed by PCR test?

If your child is aged under 18 years and 6 months and does not have any symptoms of COVID-19 (high temperature, new or continuous cough, loss of or change in, normal sense of taste or smell) they do not have to self-isolate as a contact of COVID-19.

They are advised to have a PCR test unless they have had a positive PCR test in the last 90 days.

Children aged 5 and under are not advised to take a PCR test unless the confirmed case is someone in their own household.

What should I do if my child has a positive result on a lateral flow device test?

If your child has a positive result on a lateral flow device test, they should self-isolate immediately and you should arrange a PCR test as soon as possible.

Other members of the household do not need to self-isolate whilst you await the PCR test result if they do not have symptoms and are aged under 18 years and 6 months or are fully vaccinated.

What should I do if my child is unwell with signs of an infection but does not have symptoms of COVID-19

Your child should not attend school if they are unwell. If you are concerned you should seek advice from your GP or Pharmacist, who will be able to advise you how long your child should stay off school. Otherwise we would recommend they do not attend school for 48 hours or until your child is symptom free, whichever is longer. We are not currently advising that preschool children get a PCR test if they do not have the three main symptoms of COVID-19.

Plans for COVID-19 testing in Secondary Schools

All secondary school pupils (year 7 and above) should receive 2 on-site lateral flow device tests, 3 to 5 days apart, on their return in the autumn term.

Secondary school pupils should then continue to test twice weekly at home until the end of September, when testing requirements will be reviewed by the government. By ensuring your child correctly carries out the lateral flow tests, it will be easier to spot asymptomatic spread amongst pupils. A positive Lateral Flow Test should always be followed up with a PCR test and the person testing should isolate until the results are back.

Your school will provide further details on whether testing will continue once we receive further information from the Government.

Nursery and primary school pupils are not asked to test at this time.

Family Testing

We would encourage everyone with children of school age to be tested twice weekly. You can order tests for home delivery, find out where you can pick up a test locally or find your local symptomatic testing sites here : [Find where to get rapid lateral flow tests - NHS \(test-and-trace.nhs.uk\)](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus/coronavirus-test-and-trace/).

Should you need to get a PCR Test because you may have been a close contact of a positive case or you have symptoms, stay at home and book a test through www.nhs.uk/coronavirus or ring 119.

Finally, I hope that the Autumn Term is a settled, happy and productive time for all Knowsley families but please do contact your school if you are unsure of anything or wish to seek further advice or support.

Local updates are also available on the Council website www.knowsley.gov.uk or via Knowsley News at www.knowsleynews.co.uk and on the Council's social media channels.

Should the need arise, I will write to you again to outline any changes to our local approach to managing the pandemic.

Yours faithfully



Jill Albertina

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Knowsley Borough Council