

Date: 20 October 2021



**WOKINGHAM  
BOROUGH COUNCIL**

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Dear Parents and Carers

### **WORKING TOGETHER TO KEEP SAFE THIS HALF TERM**

It's nearly half term and we know you are all looking forward to spending time together with your families and enjoying social activities.

As our children take a break from their classrooms, we encourage you to please pause for a moment and consider how you can all stay safe and healthy together.

The case rate in Wokingham Borough is currently higher than everyone would like it to be. The cases are particularly high amongst school aged children and consequently also rising in the adults who live with them.

Our schools have been working hard to keep everyone as safe as possible in the run up to half term, you can continue to help and make the return to school safe after the break by planning your half term activities carefully.

Thank you for all your help in continuing to keep our schools as safe as possible. Your support with keeping household contacts at home has made a big difference in stopping onward transmission in schools. We really appreciate that this has meant some time spent at home awaiting test results, but your investment in this time has prevented greater numbers of children needing to miss school for even longer periods. Your support has been invaluable! Thank you.

All of our schools in the borough will be continuing to work hard to ensure your children get the best education offer possible after the half term break. We are working closely with school leaders to support them in making education as safe as possible and this may mean a few operational changes.

As we approached half term, we took the decision to advise all those attending our secondary settings to wear face coverings until the half term break. This will be kept under review, and we will initially be asking everyone to continue with this for the first two weeks after the holiday.

We will also be inviting secondary age pupils to increase their home Lateral Flow Testing with each child testing on the day before they return to school and then 3x per week for the first two weeks of November. We are truly proud of the way in which you and your children have supported the Lateral Flow testing programme so far - it makes such a difference.

In primary schools you may see some changes to events such as inter-school activities and larger events where many pupils come together; including mixed group assemblies or where other people are invited onto site.

All schools will also be reviewing sickness policies and asking unwell pupils and staff to remain at home until they get better. These steps help prevent transmission of cases and keep more children in school in the long run.

Each school will review its operations based on staffing and local circumstances. Sometimes this may appear

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confusing. We understand this but ask you to support your schools' leaders as they continue to work to make things as safe as possible. What might be possible in one school, may not be possible in the school nearby where a brother, sister, or friend attends. This may be due to case numbers in the different schools. Where case numbers are high, more measures are required.

We know that it can also be confusing to understand why schools are undertaking measures that you do not currently see in the wider community. There are several reasons for this. Your school leaders must act as a reasonable parent to protect your children whilst they are in their care. School leaders also have a duty of care to ensure a safe workplace for their employees. Whilst vaccination rates are high nationally and this gives our adult population and increasingly some of our teenager's protection, our younger children remain without the protection afforded by vaccination.

Let's continue to work together to minimise the impact on our children's education by keeping Covid-19 out of our schools after the holiday.

With the darker evenings and colder temperatures, activities and gatherings will naturally take place indoors where it's easier for winter infections to spread.

So, what can you do to help keep your children and your wider family well?

**Take a Lateral Flow Test (LFT)** – even if you all feel well, take an LFT before you meet up with people indoors. This is because 1 in 3 people get Covid-19 without any symptoms. You don't want to pass on the infection to someone who doesn't have as strong of an immune system as you.

**Wear a face mask in enclosed, crowded spaces** – Covid-19 is spread through airborne transmission which means when someone with Covid-19 breathes, speaks, coughs or sneezes, they release particles. Face masks helps reduce the spread of these particles from an infected person.

**Wash your hands** – frequent hand washing has always been the best ways to avoid getting ill as it reduces the spread of bacteria and viruses. With Covid-19 this is now even more important for us all.

**Meet outdoors if you are able** – not only is it safer to meet outdoors, having a wander through a park and seeing the breath-taking colours of Autumn can do wonders for your wellbeing and keeps us all fit and active.

**Open windows when indoors** – good ventilation reduces the risk of Covid-19 particles spreading in the air, so keep some windows open when you have visitors at home.

**Use the NHS Covid-19 app** – the test, trace and isolate system is helping to manage the positive cases mixing in the community, so please continue to use the app.

**Gett enough sleep** – lack of sleep can have a serious impact on your immune system, making you more vulnerable. Try to keep to regular sleeping hours, going to bed and getting up at the same time each day.

**Flu jabs and Covid-19 boosters** – the over 50s will be contacted by the NHS to get flu jabs and Covid-19 boosters this winter. Please get yours if you are eligible.

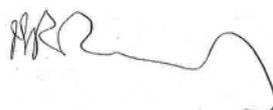
**Stay home if you feel ill** – take a PCR test and don't go out, this stops the spread of Covid-19 and other viruses, protecting your loved ones and colleagues.

Thank you for your continued engagement and support.

Yours sincerely



Carol Cammiss  
Director of Childrens Services



Meradin Peachey  
Director of Public Health



Cllr Graham Howe  
Executive Member, Children's Services