



Please ask for: Vicky Head
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Dear Parent/Carer

An important message from Vicky Head, Director of Public Health

Thank you for all you have done so far this year to bring down the rate of COVID-19 infection in Bedford Borough. Prior to pupils' return next week, I wanted to write to remind you of the guidance and procedures that are in place to help ensure that the return of all children, young people and staff to schools, colleges and nurseries is as safe as possible.

Please remember to social distance and wear face coverings if possible at the school gates to prevent the spread of COVID-19. The rate of infection is falling in Bedford Borough but it remains high, and we are asking everyone to continue to play their part so that it continues to fall.

All of our schools, colleges and nurseries in the Borough are working very hard to ensure children, young people and staff are as safe as possible whilst they are onsite, but we need the support of parents, families and carers when it comes to what happens before and after school.

In the past, there have been reports from concerned residents and parents of gatherings of parents, carers and young people near school gates and sometimes outside of people's homes, particularly before and after the school day. Please remember that under the current national restrictions no one is allowed to meet outside in a public place, unless they are from the same household or support bubble or exercising with one other person. Gatherings like these increase the risk that the virus will spread and the Bedford Borough Covid Marshals will be visiting settings to help move people along.

It is illegal for households to mix indoors (apart from support or childcare bubbles), which means that play dates and meeting up indoors are also prohibited at this current time. I'd like to remind everyone that COVID-19 has not gone away and we all need to work together to control the spread of the virus.

Lateral flow testing for households

The government has confirmed that twice-weekly 'no symptom' testing using rapid lateral flow tests that can be done at home will be available to all households with primary, secondary and college aged children and young people (including their childcare and support bubbles). Up to 1 in 3 COVID-19 cases have no symptoms but can still pass on the virus, so regular testing will help to find more cases, break chains of transmission and help keep educational settings as safe as possible.

It is important to remember that a negative rapid flow test does not completely rule out infection, and social distancing and infection prevention measures (e.g. Hands – Face – Space) should continue. If you are already isolating due to contact with a positive COVID-19 case, a negative lateral flow test does not mean you can stop isolating.

If you do test positive following a home lateral flow test, you and your household must follow self-isolation guidelines and arrange for a standard PCR test.

Rapid flow test kits for home use can be collected from some local testing sites. You can find out where by using this search tool:

<https://find-covid-19-rapid-test-sites.maps.test-and-trace.nhs.uk/>

For those who are unable to collect the rapid test kits, a limited number are available to order online: <https://www.gov.uk/order-coronavirus-rapid-lateral-flow-tests>

The full guidance for households and support bubbles of school pupils and staff, now eligible for twice-weekly rapid testing is available here:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/rapid-lateral-flow-testing-for-households-and-bubbles-of-school-pupils-and-staff>

Remember, anyone who has COVID-19 symptoms – high temperature, a new, continuous cough, or a loss or change to sense of smell or taste – should self-isolate immediately along with their household and arrange a PCR test. These can be booked via the Government website or by calling 119.

Thank you for all your help in driving down infections.



Vicky Head
Director of Public Health