

PUBLIC HEALTH

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Date: 29 November 2021

Dear Parent/Carer,

New temporary measures related to the Omicron variant of COVID-19 in the UK

On Saturday 27 November, new temporary measures following the emergence of the Omicron variant of COVID-19 in the UK were announced nationally.

The new measures, many of which will be familiar to you, have been introduced to reduce the risk of the new variant spreading as there are signs that it may spread more quickly and may also be more likely to cause reinfection. Scientists internationally and nationally are monitoring the new variant very closely to learn more about it.

We fully appreciate that this is not what you want to hear, however, your support in limiting transmission of the virus is now more important than ever.

You can do your bit to limit the spread of COVID-19 in our school/settings and neighbourhoods, including reduce the risk of the new Omicron variant spreading by making sure you follow these important measures:

Vaccination

Vaccine is a key defence against COVID-19 and has reduced the number of people seriously ill or dying. Over 85% of very severely ill people in hospital are not fully vaccinated. All eligible staff, parents and students aged 12 and over should get vaccinated. Find out how here <https://www.birminghamandsolihullcovidvaccine.nhs.uk/> and please encourage family and friends to go well before the holidays. The new walk-in centre on Solihull High Street offers vaccination (first, second and boosters) to anyone aged 16 and above 7 days a week.

Face coverings

Face coverings should be worn in communal areas in all education settings by staff, visitors and pupils or students in year 7 and above, unless they are exempt. Pupils and staff are not expected to wear face coverings in classrooms or outdoors.

Pupils or students (in year 7 or above) should continue to wear face coverings on public and dedicated school transport, unless they are exempt.

From 30th November, face coverings will also be required in shops and on public transport.

Testing

All educational and childcare settings should continue to encourage staff and students (in year 7 and above) to test twice weekly using lateral flow device (LFD) tests. Please also use these if you are meeting friends or going out in large group. You can pick test kits up at local pharmacies or at testing centres (search on line for 'Solihull testing centre'). If you have symptoms, please get a PCR. It remains a legal requirement to self-isolate for 10 days if you test positive. Financial support is available if you need this.

Contact tracing and isolation

The current guidance on contact tracing and isolation remains in place. In addition to these, **any suspected or confirmed close contacts of the Omicron variant will be asked to isolate for 10 days regardless of vaccination status or age.** They will be contacted directly by the UK Health Security Agency.

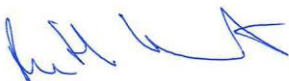
Changes to international travel to England

Individuals arriving in England from red list countries must follow [red list rules](#) including testing and quarantine. In addition, everyone coming back to the UK from abroad must do a PCR test and self-isolate until they have the results.

Schools/settings may need to re-consider plans for trips outside the UK, recognising the risk of disruption to education resulting from the need to isolate and test on arrival back into the UK. We are very grateful for your understanding with this.

We thank you once again for your ongoing support to limit the spread of COVID-19 across Solihull. It is very much appreciated.

Yours sincerely



Ruth Tennant
Director of Public Health