

**Your ref:**

**Our ref:**

**Date:** 15 December 2020

Dear Parent or Carer

### **COVID testing for pupils in middle, upper and secondary schools and their families**

COVID-19 cases in parts of Central Bedfordshire have been rising rapidly recently, with the fastest rises in rates among the 11-18 age group.

As many as 1 in 3 people who have coronavirus have no symptoms and could be spreading it without realising it. I am writing to you to explain how we have arranged for you and your family to get tested but also to ask you and your families to limit your social activities to avoid spreading the virus unknowingly.

#### **Access to testing**

We want to identify as many people who are positive for COVID-19 as possible, especially those who may not be displaying symptoms (a cough, temperature and a loss/change of taste or sense of smell).

We have made arrangements for all staff, students and their families who attend middle and upper schools or secondary schools and colleges to request a home testing kit. You can request a kit for every member of your household online at <https://www.gov.uk/get-coronavirus-test>

The test will be delivered to your home, you can administer the test yourself and return it following the instructions that come with the test.

Whilst tests are not compulsory, we strongly urge every student, parent and school and college staff to take part as the more people who are tested, the better able we are to contain the virus. If we can break the chain of infections in this way, we can help to reduce the number of COVID-19 cases, limit the number of people who might fall very ill, and protect the NHS.

## What you can do

We all have a part to play in controlling the virus. With the school holidays and festive season approaching it is tempting to not stick to the rules. However, it is more important than ever that we continue to:

- Social distance from anyone we don't live with
- Wash our hands regularly
- Wear a face covering
- Self-isolate if you have symptoms, test positive or are contacted by Test and Trace and asked to isolate

Mixing with other people increases the risk of spreading the virus. Whilst for most young people they only experience mild symptoms of the virus they can pass it on to others who may have underlying conditions or be elderly who are much more likely to be very ill from the virus. This is why it is vitally important that young people limit their social contact with others.

In school, bubbles are formed so that the virus can be contained if someone tests positive. If your child is no longer attending school, they can no longer mix with students who were in their school bubble. They must only have close contact with people they live with or who are in their support bubble.

As we approach the festive season, I urge you and your family to continue to help us keep the virus under control. We can only do this if everyone plays their part.

Vaccinations have begun and there is hope that 2021 will see us all return to some normality but for now, we have to keep up with the efforts to control the virus so that we can protect everyone in our community, particularly those who are most vulnerable.

Yours sincerely



Vicky Head

Director of Public Health for Central Bedfordshire, Bedford Borough and Milton Keynes