

25th November 2021



Dear Parent / Carer,

Updated Covid-19 Advice from the Director of Public Health for Somerset

I am writing to inform you that Directors of Public Health (DsPH) across the South West met on the 24th November and unanimously agreed that it is appropriate to continue with current Covid-19 response measures advised in schools, until the end of this Autumn term. Whilst infection rates are declining in some parts of the county overall our rates remain high. The South West continues to have the highest Covid-19 rates in the country.

The Regional Schools Commissioner Office was a part of this discussion and is supportive of this decision. I have enclosed [the statement](#) with this letter.

In line with this consensus agreement, I have advised educational settings in Somerset to keep in place the previously recommended measures until the end of Autumn term 2021, unless an individualised letter is received.

Here is a brief reminder of the enhanced measures the Somerset County Council Public Health team have recommended:

- Continue to use face coverings in secondary schools in communal areas such as corridors, when movement occurs between lessons and on school transport if used
- Reduce mixing between groups of students as much as possible. Consider pausing 'whole school' assemblies and other "large gatherings" indoors
- Promote social distancing and reduce crowding where possible; minimise pinch points in the school day, for example, staggered lunch times, or start times
- Reinforce social distancing and good infection prevention control amongst staff (ventilation and touchpoint cleaning especially in areas where staff gather)
- Any close or household contacts of confirmed cases of Covid-19 should book a PCR test and whilst awaiting test results, undertake daily LFD tests and only attend school if this is negative – this includes students of primary age under parental discretion. The new LFD tests are nasal swabs only and much easier to use than previous kits

Please continue regular LFD testing of secondary and college aged children and all staff and household contacts of pupils, so that we can continue education for all children. Thousands of parents, children and staff are conducting these LFD tests regularly. The reporting of both positive and negative tests is important to help us

understand the spread of the virus and should be encouraged. LFD tests are very good at identifying infectious individuals, when prevalence is this high. Identifying asymptomatic infectious cases, helps us to stop the spread of infection within schools

Due to our current our high levels of infection, our joint aim should be to keep transmission levels within schools to a minimum to maximise children's time in good quality face to face education and to ensure every child benefits from the wider well-being benefits this brings

Schools should include enrichment and extra-curricular activities, including sporting events within their own contingency plans. Measures should be put in place to reduce intergroup mixing; this would include travel to and from activities as well as limiting large gatherings or inter-school activities. However, most sporting events can take place outside and we believe the health benefits of sports and extra-curricular activities outweigh the risk of Covid-19 for young individuals. Our advice is that these activities can take place with the adoption of measures that reduce the risk of transmission.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank you for everything you are doing to maintain education for all children, despite this challenging time.

Yours sincerely



**Professor Trudi Grant, MSc PH, UKPHR, FFPH
Director of Public Health, SCC**