

EDUCATION, LEISURE & HOUSING

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Dear parents and carers,

With schools having been back for nearly four weeks, I want to commend the care, commitment and courage shown by everyone in playing their part in keeping our communities safe.

The number of cases of COVID-19 across Orkney have been rising of late and have affected a small proportion of adults and young people who attend at some of our schools.

On Monday this week, there were 22 positive cases linked to Stromness Academy and we now also see 6 positive cases at Kirkwall Grammar School.

We have worked closely with Public Health colleagues in Orkney and, together, we have managed local clusters very effectively. This was only successful thanks to the diligence of parents, pupils and staff in following the mitigations in place and for managing these situations positively but cautiously.

Whilst so much has changed over the past 18 months, the fundamentals within our schools have remained the same. Children and young people still come to school to learn, play and socialise with their friends.

The easing of restrictions has left some relieved and others anxious. I want to reassure you all that staff are doing everything they can to make your child's experience a positive one, in particular by implementing Scottish Government guidance to keep us all as safe as possible.

I do understand that there will be a level of nervousness among some of you with regard to the recent transmission rates, on this basis, the Education team felt it may be helpful to share the following information with you:

Mitigating measures include:

- An ongoing request for staff and secondary students to carry out twice-weekly lateral flow device tests.
- Enhanced cleaning in nurseries, schools and school transport.
- Increased ventilation.
- Face coverings as required.
- Hand washing and sanitising.
- Distancing between adults and between pupils when required.

A detailed list of the mitigations is published below.

There has also been some confusion around testing and the difference between PCR and LFD tests.

Only request a PCR test if:

- You have COVID symptoms, or if you have no symptoms but have had a positive Lateral Flow Device (LFD) test.
- You are contacted by Test & Protect

Lateral Flow Device Tests:

- The Scottish Government guidance recommends that people should carry out twice weekly Lateral Flow Device tests
- You should take a lateral flow test only where you do not have symptoms of COVID-19.
- Please ensure that you log the results of your Lateral Flow Device (LFD) test online if you test positive or negative, this helps give an indication of whether or not the virus is spreading.

Parents who are concerned their children might have contracted Covid can [complete a self-help guide on NHS Inform](#) that will help them determine if this is the case.

If you develop symptoms or you have a positive LFD test, then you must request a PCR test through the Covid Assessment Centre (01856 888211).

To request a vaccination call: 0300 303 5313.

The Covid Assessment Centre opens at 7.45am and closes at 6pm (Mon-Fri). After a positive LFD you must isolate until your PCR test confirms you are negative. If your PCR is positive there will be isolation protocols that you will have to follow the NHS Orkney team will help folk every step of the way.

Unless exempt, current mitigations are:

Hygiene, Ventilation and Face Coverings

- All hand and respiratory hygiene mitigations will continue to be encouraged, and an enhanced cleaning regime will continue to apply in buildings and vehicles.
- Windows should continue to be opened regularly to maximise ventilation.
- Face coverings will continue to be a requirement at all times for all staff and learners in secondary schools.
- In primary school, all other establishments, adults will be expected to wear a face covering whenever they cannot maintain physical distance from other adults, children or young people.
- In nurseries, adults will be expected to wear a face covering whenever they cannot maintain physical distance from other adults, including parents.
- In primary schools, adults will also need to wear a face covering whenever they are moving around communal areas of the school, including corridors.
- Only pupils aged 12 and over will be required to wear a face covering when travelling on dedicated school transport.

Groupings and Distancing

- The grouping of pupils and adults into discrete bubbles will no longer be required, but assemblies and other large gatherings will continue to be kept on hold for the time being.
- There will be no requirement for children and young people to maintain physical distancing between each other, although this will continue to be encouraged in secondary schools.

- The distance that adults are required to maintain from other adults, children and young people has formally been reduced to 1 metre, however schools will continue to encourage pupils and staff to maintain 2 metre distancing wherever possible. Nursery children are not required to keep a distance from adults or children in the setting.
- Pupils using dedicated school transport will not be expected to maintain distancing between each other, but there will remain an expectation that drivers remain at least 1 metre distance from all passengers.
- Parents and carers will continue to be discouraged from attending school premises except in cases where this is agreed with the school as being absolutely necessary.

Vaccination, Testing and Self-Isolation

- Adults and secondary pupils will be encouraged to take twice-weekly LFD tests and to record their results online.
- Any adult, child or young person who develops the symptoms of COVID-19, or who test positive must self-isolate immediately in line with NHS Guidance, and notify their school.
- Anyone who is fully vaccinated identified by Test and Protect as a close contact of a positive case should self-isolate immediately and book a PCR Test. If the test result is negative and they remain without symptoms then they may return to school, whilst remaining vigilant.
- Any young person aged between 12 years and 18 years 4 months, who is not yet fully vaccinated and who is identified by Test and Protect as a close contact of a positive case should self-isolate immediately and book a PCR Test. If the test result is negative and they remain without symptoms then they may return to school, whilst remaining vigilant.
- Any adult aged over 18 years 4 months, who is not fully vaccinated and who is identified by Test and Protect as a close contact of a positive case should self-isolate immediately and seek a PCR test. They should continue to self-isolate for 10 days from onset of symptoms even if the test result is negative.
- Children and young people aged from 5 to 17 will no longer be subject to a blanket requirement to self-isolate for 10 days if they are identified as a close contact by Test and Protect. Instead, they should self-isolate immediately and book a PCR Test. If the test result is negative and they remain without symptoms then they may return to school, whilst remaining vigilant. Children aged under 5 will be exempt from this testing.
- Schools and Early Learning Childcare settings will not be required to stand down classes in the event of a positive case being identified. They will, instead, send parents and staff a 'warn and inform' letter advising them of the facts and reminding them that there is no need to self-isolate unless contacted by Test and Protect and advised otherwise.
- The Chief Medical Officer advises that children and young people on the highest risk list can now follow that same advice as the rest of the population.

Once again, I thank you for your positive support in the management of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

Yours sincerely



James Wylie
Executive Director