

## **Public Health Advice for January 2022**

Covid-19 case numbers in Somerset continue to increase and are currently at 766.6 per 100k. The expectation is for Somerset cases to continue to rise as the Omicron variant is more transmissible. Omicron is now the dominant strain of Covid-19 in the South-West, but we are behind the peak of cases seen in London and the South East, this will come to the South West in the next week or two.

The DfE have not provided any new guidance since the 14th Dec, any updates to DfE guidance will be communicated when it is received.

Public Health advice still stands and for us as a first school this means we are returning to school with the same enhanced amber measures that were in place prior to Christmas.

### **Updates to National Covid-19 Guidance:**

Please note the following changes to national Covid-19 guidance:

- 'Test to release' - from the 22nd December enables the 10-day self isolation period for people who have tested positive for Covid-19 to be reduced to 7 days. Negative LFD results must be received on day 6 and day 7 of the self-isolation period to qualify for early release.
- Daily testing of close contacts for 7 days

### **Self-Isolation Guidance (from 22nd Dec):**

From Wednesday 22nd December 2021, positive cases will be able to leave self-isolation and return to work if they take LFD tests on two consecutive days from Day 6, these must be taken at least a full 24 hours apart. Both test results on each day must be negative and if the case does not have a high temperature, they can leave self-isolation. Those leaving self-isolation early as a result of these changes will be strongly advised to follow the current regulations in place, including limiting close contact with others outside their household, especially in crowded, enclosed or poorly ventilated spaces.

### **Update to Guidance for Close Contacts (from 14th Dec)**

Fully vaccinated adults (2 doses more than 14 days ago) and children (5 to 18 ½ years), identified as a contact of someone with Covid-19 should take a lateral flow test every day for 7 days. Children and young people should continue to attend their setting as normal, unless they have a positive test result.

This replaces previous guidance for all close contacts of a positive case to self-isolate unless exempt. This new guidance also means that close contacts no longer need to get a PCR test.

If you are not legally required to self-isolate, you will be provided with advice on testing, advised to take extra caution, and given guidance on preventing the spread of Covid-19.

Participation in Daily Testing for Covid Contacts (DTCC) is strongly encouraged but not mandatory and is not a condition of attendance. However, if a setting is in an outbreak situation, then suitable mitigations will need to be identified via risk assessment.

Individuals within 90 days of a positive test are also encouraged to undertake daily LFD if identified as a close contact.

Regular LFD tests are not recommended for children aged under 5. If they live with someone who has Covid-19 they are not legally required to self-isolate but should limit their contact with anyone who is at higher risk of severe illness if infected with Covid-19 and arrange for them to take a PCR test as soon as possible.

### **Access to LFD Test Kits**

Public Health are aware that many people have been recently unable to order LFDs online. More tests should become available for home delivery every few hours as availability is refreshed regularly. People are encouraged to re-visit the site every few hours. Please remember that LFDs can be collected at local participating pharmacies, as well as via the online ordering service. You will need a QR code to collect from a pharmacy.

### **Symptomatic and Asymptomatic Testing:**

It's important to continue all you do to encourage household, parent and staff LFD testing. Please also be aware that Public Health could advise daily LFD testing for certain groups during an outbreak. Close contact daily LFD testing includes students of primary age under parental discretion. The new LFD tests are nasal swabs only and much easier to use than previous stocks. For primary aged children LFD test kits are available through the usual routes (local pharmacies or online).

### **Advice for Parents Collecting Children:**

If a parent or guardian has received a positive PCR test, by law, they must self-isolate at home for the full 10 day period. We have been asked to remind all parents that collecting children from school is not an exemption to self-isolation. Encouraging parents to have a friend or neighbour in mind that they could ask to do the school run 'just in case', will help them avoid breaking self-isolation rules by leaving their home.