

14 December 2021

Dear parents and guardians,

Firstly, I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for all for your continued support during what has been yet another challenging term.

Before you enjoy some much-needed quality time with your loved ones over the Christmas period, there are some important information I would like to share with you.

As you will be aware, England has moved to Plan B measures in response to the rapid spread of the new Omicron variant of Covid-19. On Sunday, the chief medical officers for England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland recommended that the UK's coronavirus alert level was raised from three to four following an exponential rise in the number of Omicron cases, prompting the government to ramp up the delivery of the booster programme.

This new variant is continuing to spread rapidly across the country, with several cases confirmed in Lancashire and more expected to come.

In the run up to Christmas many schools in Lancashire have been working flat out to manage cases of Covid-19 whilst trying to keep as many children in school as possible for face-to-face education. One of our key priorities is to manage this new variant and minimise further disruption to face-to-face education, while managing the overall Covid-19 risk.

To achieve this, I am asking for your help in taking the following actions for keeping Lancashire safe:

### **Vaccinations**

Getting vaccination is one of the most important things we can do to minimise disruption to children's education and to protect them from becoming unwell with Covid-19.

On 29<sup>th</sup> November 2021 the government accepted updated advice from the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) following the emergence of the Omicron variant.

JCVI recommended that 12 to 17-year-olds should receive a second dose, which should take place no sooner than 12 weeks after the first dose. Children aged 12 to 17 can book their vaccination via the [National Booking Service](#) online or by calling 119.

For 12 to 15-year-olds who have not yet had a first dose, appointments have been made available and allocated specifically to this age group over the school holidays. These can be booked by the [National Booking Service](#) for anyone over 12 who has not yet had a first dose. They should come along with their legal parent or guardian.

For your young people aged 16 to 17 years and 8 months old, there are several sites across Lancashire where they can get their Covid-19 vaccine.

[A consent form is available on GOV.UK](#)

Visit [www.healthierlsc.co.uk/getmyjab](http://www.healthierlsc.co.uk/getmyjab) for more info about where your child can get their vaccination.

## Testing

One of the most important things we can do to manage the virus through routine testing over the festive period, and before the return to school in the New Year, using free, rapid lateral flow tests. If you are planning to meet friends and family who do not live in your household, either in an indoor or outdoor setting, then please take a lateral flow test before you do so.

Before your child returns to school, it is important that they take a lateral flow test. If test result is positive, then isolate immediately and book a confirmatory PCR test. Only leave home to take the test. You must also inform your child's school.

If your child has **one or more** of the following Covid-19 symptoms they must isolate and book a PCR test immediately:

1. a high temperature
2. a new, continuous cough
3. loss or change to your sense of smell or taste

If your child's PCR test result is positive, they must isolate from the day their symptoms began and for the next 10 days. If your child has other symptoms and are in doubt, take a PCR test and keep them home like you normally would if they were unwell.

## Close contacts

From Tuesday 14 December, people who are fully vaccinated and identified as a contact of someone with Covid-19 – whether Omicron or not – should take a rapid lateral flow test every day for 7 days to help slow the spread of Covid-19.

[Read the government's guidance for contacts of people with confirmed Covid-19 infection here.](#)

## Additional measures

We are continuing to support our schools in maintaining good ventilation, infection prevention and control measures. We will continue to follow the government's guidance, as set out in its '[Contingency framework: education and childcare settings](#)'. This may mean that decisions are taken by the school in collaboration with Lancashire's public health team to put in place additional measures dependent on a settings' individual circumstances.

I would once again like to ask you to continue to support staff as they navigate this period.

January brings a new year, but it will also bring new challenges. By working together, I am sure we can overcome them. Have a wonderful Christmas and all the best for the New Year.

Yours sincerely



**Dr Sakthi Karunanithi**  
**Director of Public Health**