



**ST HELENS**  
BOROUGH COUNCIL

**Children and Young People's  
Services Department**

Atlas House  
Corporation Street  
St Helens  
Merseyside  
WA9 1LD

Contact: Jim Leivers  
Tel: 01744 671802  
Ruth Du Plessis  
Tel: 01744 676487

[JimLeivers@sthelens.gov.uk](mailto:JimLeivers@sthelens.gov.uk)  
[ruthduplessis@sthelens.gov.uk](mailto:ruthduplessis@sthelens.gov.uk)

Our ref: JL/RdP  
Your ref:

1 September 2021

Dear Parents/Guardian

We trust that you have had an enjoyable summer spending time with family and friends and that you have stayed safe and well.

We are writing in light of changes made to national policies on self-isolation and to provide information on how COVID-19 will be managed in the school this term. The changes have been made to reduce the number of children who are sent home to isolate because they are close contacts of a positive case. The reason for this is to minimise disruption to education. Individuals who test positive for covid-19 will still need to isolate and additional actions may be required if there is an outbreak in the school.

Currently the seven-day infection rate in the Borough of St Helens (323 per 100,000 up to 25<sup>th</sup> of August) is similar to the England rate (315 per 100,000 up to 23<sup>rd</sup> of August). However, we are expecting to see an increase in cases following on from the August Bank Holiday. Regular testing, especially during the first couple of weeks back in September is really important to detect cases quickly and prevent spread within the school and we are asking for your support with this. We have produced this question and answer sheet to help answer the questions you might have.

## **CHANGES TO NATIONAL SELF-ISOLATION GUIDANCE**

From 16 August, people aged under 18 years and 6 months or who are fully vaccinated are no longer legally required to isolate if they are a close contact of someone with COVID-19. Instead, such people will be advised (but not legally required) to get a PCR test unless they have had a positive PCR test in the previous 90 days.

Regardless of age or vaccination status, anyone who develops any of the three main COVID-19 symptoms (see below) must get a PCR test as soon as possible and isolate until the result is available. People who get a positive PCR test must continue to isolate for 10 days as usual.

Some likely scenarios are described below along with our advice:

### **What should I do if my child develops COVID-19 symptoms?**

The main symptoms of COVID-19 are:

- new continuous cough and/or
- fever (temperature of 37.8°C or higher) or
- loss of or change in, normal sense of taste or smell (anosmia)

If your child develops any of these symptoms, you must arrange for them to have a PCR test as soon as possible. A PCR test can be arranged via the <https://www.gov.uk/get-coronavirus-test> website or by contacting NHS 119 via telephone if you do not have internet access.

Your child should self-isolate immediately and they should not attend school.

Please contact the school by phone to inform them your child has COVID-19 symptoms and you are awaiting a COVID-19 test.

### **What should I do if my child has COVID-19 confirmed by PCR test?**

Anyone with COVID-19 confirmed by PCR test should self-isolate until the latest of:

- 10 days after the onset of their symptoms, or
- 10 days after their test day if they are asymptomatic

Self-isolation means your child should not go to school, attend any out of school activities or visit a friend's house. They should not visit any public places, use public transport or go out to exercise. You should not have visitors into the home except for those providing essential care.

If you receive a request by text, email or phone to log into the [NHS Test and Trace](#) service website you should do this, you will be asked about symptoms and to identify close contacts.

Please contact the school by phone and inform them your child has COVID-19 confirmed by PCR test. It is really important you let them know if your child has confirmed COVID-19 so they can monitor the number of children with COVID-19 across the school.

### **What should I do if my child has a positive result on a lateral flow device test?**

If your child has a positive result on a lateral flow device test, they should self-isolate immediately and you should arrange a PCR test as soon as possible.

Other members of the household do not need to self-isolate whilst you await the PCR test result if they do not have symptoms and are aged under 18 years and 6 months or are fully vaccinated. However, adults who have only had one vaccination or who are not vaccinated should isolate whilst awaiting the PCR test result.

### **What should I do if my child is unwell with signs of a virus or infection but does not have symptoms of COVID-19?**

Your child should be kept home from school if they are unwell. If concerned you should seek advice from your GP or Pharmacist, they will be able to advise you how long your child should stay off school. Otherwise we would recommend keeping them off for 48 hours or until the child is symptom free, whichever is longer. We are not currently advising that preschool children get a PCR test if they do not have the three main symptoms of COVID-19.

### **What should I do if my child is a contact of someone with COVID-19 confirmed by PCR test?**

If your child is aged under 18 years and 6 months and does not have any symptoms of COVID-19 (high temperature, or new continuous cough, or loss of or change in, normal sense of taste or smell) they do not have to self-isolate as a contact of COVID-19.

They are advised to have a PCR test unless they have had a positive PCR test in the last 90 days.

Children aged 5 and under are not advised to take a PCR test unless the confirmed case is someone in their own household.

### **What will happen if several children test positive for Covid-19 in the school?**

If there are several children who have tested positive for covid-19 and this indicates there is an outbreak or high rates in the local area, the school will seek advice from public health. If there is the potential for further spread in the school, additional actions may be required such as testing, increased ventilation, stopping of some activities, mask wearing and enhanced cleaning. As a last resort, where these actions have not broken chains of in-school transmission, short-term attendance restrictions, such as sending home a class or year group will be considered. If this does happen, support for home learning will be provided.

### **Plans for COVID-19 testing in Secondary Schools**

All secondary school pupils (year 7 and above) should receive 2 on-site lateral flow device tests, 3 to 5 days apart, on their return in the autumn term.

Secondary school pupils should then continue to test twice weekly at home until the end of September, when this will be reviewed. By ensuring your child correctly carries out the lateral flow tests, it will be easier to spot asymptomatic spread amongst pupils. A positive Lateral Flow Test should always be followed up with a PCR test and the person testing should isolate until the results are back. We will provide further details on whether testing will continue when we are made aware.

In St Helens we see testing as important in identifying cases quickly so we can stop the spread of covid-19 within the school, especially at the start of term. Therefore, we are offering a £500 incentive to be spent on resources for the four schools that can evidence the greatest uptake of testing during the first three weeks in September.

## Nursery and primary school pupils

Nursery and primary school pupils are not expected to test. However, we are encouraging parents of primary school children to test themselves twice a week and to support this we are supplying our primary schools with additional test kits at the start of September. We are also issuing a £500 incentive to the primary schools with the highest uptake of staff testing and who are encouraging parents to test also.

### ACCESSING COVID-19 TESTING IN ST HELENS

#### Symptomatic testing and testing for close contacts

PCR tests can be booked at any of the NHS sites that operate Monday – Sunday 8am – 8pm on the gov.uk website <https://www.gov.uk/get-coronavirus-test>

PCR tests for home delivery can also be ordered by calling 119.

#### Symptom free testing

Test kits can be ordered on line at

<https://www.gov.uk/order-coronavirus-rapid-lateral-flow-tests>

Or collect a test kit

<https://www.sthelens.gov.uk/coronavirus/covid-19-testing/symptom-free-testing/>

<https://maps.test-and-trace.nhs.uk/>

## Update on vaccination for children and young people

Anyone aged 16 and above is now eligible for the vaccine. For children who are carers or have clinical vulnerabilities, their GP will have already called them, they are eligible for two doses. All other healthy 16 and 17 year olds are eligible for one dose only. The current National Booking System is unable to take bookings for this age group but 16 and 17 year olds can attend any local walk in sessions. To find out where and when these are, you can search online for 'Find my Local Covid-19 Vaccination Walk in Centre' and you will be directed to the NHS website where local sites are listed with opening times

Some children with specific clinical conditions may be eligible for vaccine from age 12. GPs are reviewing their patient lists and these children will be invited for vaccination directly by their GP.

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/coronavirus-vaccination/find-a-walk-in-coronavirus-covid-19-vaccination-site/>

We thank you for your continued support.

Yours sincerely



Jim Leivers  
Director of Children and Young People's Services



R. du Plessis  
Director of Public Health