

Directorate: Adults and Health

Team: Public Health

Dr Will Maimaris Director of Public Health

Date: 31/03/2022

UPDATE ON END OF FREE COVID-19 TESTING AND NEW GUIDANCE

Dear Parents and Carers,

From the 1st of April, the Government will no longer provide free universal COVID-19 testing for the general public in England. This includes access to tests for schools, including in SEND settings. I am writing to let you know what the new guidance means for you and your children, in relation to infection control in schools and early years settings.

The risk of serious illness from COVID-19 is much lower than earlier in the pandemic due to a combination of a milder variant being dominant and high levels of immunity in the population. However, in order to continue to minimise risk to children, families and staff, schools and early years settings will still have measures in place to minimise spread of COVID-19 and other infectious disease. For example, a focus on good ventilation, making the most of outdoor time and hand hygiene.

- Although testing is no longer available, children and young people who are unwell and have a high temperature should stay at home and avoid contact with other people. They can go back to school, college or childcare when they no longer have a high temperature, and they are well enough to attend.
- From 1 April, anyone with a positive COVID-19 test result will be advised to try to stay at home and avoid contact with other people for five days, which is when they are most infectious. For children and young people aged 18 and under, the advice will be three days.
- Anyone with mild symptoms such as a runny nose or a mild cough may attend, as long as they are well enough to do so.
- Please remind your children to cover their mouth and nose with a tissue or their sleeve (not hands) when they cough or sneeze, and to put used tissues in the bin immediately. Ask them to wash their hands with soap and water often, especially before eating, and to use hand sanitiser gel if soap and water are not available.

VACCINATION

The vaccination programme is opening up to healthy 5–11-year-olds from April, and we would encourage you to take up this offer. You can read more about the vaccine and book an appointment here: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/coronavirus-vaccination/>

12 – 15-year-olds

From 1st April the in-school COVID-19 vaccination programme will come to an end. However, 12 to 15 year olds will still be able to access the vaccine outside of schools at a vaccination centre,

pharmacy or walk-in centre. Parents can book a Covid-19 vaccination appointment online or by speaking to their GP or calling 119. Alternatively, they can find a walk-in Covid-19 vaccination site.

5-11-year-olds

From April, healthy 5-11 year olds will also be offered the COVID-19 vaccine. Vaccinations will take place outside of schools in vaccination centres, pharmacies, GPs and walk-in centres. Parents of 5-11 year olds will receive a letter from the NHS with further information. Online bookings for 5-11 year olds will open in April.

I would like to thank you again for your ongoing efforts in reducing COVID infections and protecting our schools, nurseries and the wider community.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a stylized 'W' followed by a more complex, cursive signature.

Dr Will Maimaris
Director of Public Health