

Our address:
Bexley Civic Offices
2, Watling Street
Bexleyheath DA6 7AT
Website: <https://www.bexley.gov.uk>

11 January 2022

Dear Parent/ Carer,

As you know, the rates of Covid in Bexley have been very high in the last few weeks with the arrival of the Omicron variant. Whilst data shows the rates of infection in children and their parents in Bexley may have passed their peak, we still face a difficult situation for the next few weeks.

There have been several changes to Government guidance to respond to the new conditions. The purpose of this letter is to summarise the latest guidance and to ensure all Bexley schools and parents are aligned.

I would be grateful if you would review the information below; if you have any questions about how this applies to your own school, please contact the school directly in the first instance.

In summary:

- In secondary schools, masks must be worn in classrooms (unless exempt) and all students should have been offered testing at school at the start of this term.
- Secondary school students should be given lateral flow test kits by their school so that families can continue the testing, twice weekly at home.
- From 11th January 2022, people who test positive on their routine LFD (ie asymptomatic) test do not need to take a PCR to confirm the result. They need to self-isolate as before. Close contacts who are not fully vaccinated also need to self-isolate for ten days. In England, fully vaccinated means two vaccinations, it does not include the booster injection at this time.
- Symptomatic people must self isolate and take a PCR test.
- For those people testing positive via a LFD or PCR, self-isolation can end at day 7 if the person has a negative LFD test on day 6 and 7 (24 hours apart)
- The testing required on returning to the UK from abroad has been simplified
- If there are outbreaks in schools, which are deemed to be above the government threshold, the school will work with Public Health and may introduce additional measures on top of the DfE guidance.

In more detail:

Face coverings

From 4th January, face coverings should be worn in classrooms and teaching spaces where students in year 7 and above are educated. The advice is temporary and will be reviewed on the 26 January 2022, in line with the overall review of Plan B measures.

Testing

All staff and secondary students are strongly encouraged to test twice a week using an LFD test and to report all results to the NHS and to their setting. For further guidance:

Get tested for coronavirus (COVID-19) - NHS (www.nhs.uk)

Rapid asymptomatic testing in specialist settings - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

Daily Testing of close contacts

People who are fully vaccinated, or aged under 18 years and 6 months, identified as a close contact of someone with COVID-19, should take an LFD test every day for 7 days and continue to attend their setting as normal, unless they have a positive test result or develop symptoms.

Children under 5 are not being advised to take part in daily testing of close contacts. For further guidance:

[Guidance for contacts of people with confirmed coronavirus \(COVID-19\) infection who do not live with the person - GOV.UK \(\[www.gov.uk\]\(http://www.gov.uk\)\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/guidance-for-contacts-of-people-with-confirmed-coronavirus-covid-19-infection-who-do-not-live-with-the-person)

Travel: return to England

From 5th January 2022 - pre-departure test removed for vaccinated travellers

Fully vaccinated passengers arriving in the UK must:

- No longer take pre-departure test
- Take a PCR within 2 days of arrival and self-isolate until they receive a negative result
 - a. From 9th January – lateral flow tests can be taken instead of PCR. If positive, a PCR must be taken, and the person must commence self-isolation. This includes children under the age of 18 years regardless of vaccination status.

Unvaccinated passengers must:

1. Take a pre-departure test
2. PCR test on days 2 and 8 on arrival
3. Self-isolate for 10 days, test to release remains an option to shortened isolation

All red list countries were removed as of 4am Wednesday 15th December 2021. Please refer to link below for further information: [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) testing before you travel to England - GOV.UK \(\[www.gov.uk\]\(http://www.gov.uk\)\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-testing-before-you-travel-to-england)

If you have questions, please contact your school in the first instance.

Bexley Council's PH team looks forward to continuing to work closely with Bexley schools. For more local information about COVID-19 please see the Council website microsite - <https://www.bexley.gov.uk/coronavirus-covid-19>

Yours sincerely,



Anjan Ghosh
DPH