



Knowsley Council

17 June 2021

Dear Headteacher

On 14 June 2021, the Government announced that the Liverpool City Region (which includes Knowsley) is eligible for what they describe as “enhanced support” due to increasing cases in our City Region of the Delta variant of COVID-19. While I am personally disappointed that there is actually not much in the way of real “enhancement” in the support which we have been offered by the Government, the fact is that the Delta variant is significantly more transmissible especially in indoor settings and it is currently spreading rapidly in our Borough.

In response to this developing situation, we are offering additional advice for consideration by schools in Knowsley.

The current level of COVID-19 cases in Knowsley is 86.8 per 100,000 people. The local case rate is expected to exceed 100 per 100,000 by the end of this week, and we are seeing case numbers double roughly every seven days. Just two weeks ago, the case level in Knowsley was 22.5 per 100,000 people.

Testing for COVID-19 in Schools

Please continue to encourage your staff, secondary age pupils (where appropriate), and families of children attending your schools to continue with twice-weekly lateral flow tests and to record their results (and importantly to do so regardless of whether they are negative, void, or positive). Regular testing is encouraged for people who do not display any symptoms, as one in three people actually have COVID-19 without experiencing any symptoms. Any positive lateral flow test results should be logged with NHS Test and Trace and a confirmatory PCR test should then also be arranged. PCR tests can be booked through www.nhs.uk/coronavirus or by ringing 119. While waiting for a confirmatory PCR result, you, members of your household, and your close contacts should isolate. If the PCR test is positive, you, members of your household, and your close contacts should continue to self-isolate for 10 days (from the date when you had symptoms or the date of your test if you didn't have symptoms) to prevent the onward transmission of the virus.

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Anyone who has COVID-19 symptoms (raised temperature, loss of taste or smell, and a new persistent cough) should stay at home or return home as soon as possible to isolate and book a PCR test again by visiting www.nhs.uk/coronavirus or calling 119).

Anyone who is generally unwell (for example with a sore throat or runny nose) should also get a PCR test for COVID-19.

PCR testing sites operate every day in Knowsley in Huyton (town centre car park), Kirkby (former College site on Cherryfield Drive), and Stockbridge Village. There are also mobile testing units which operate across our Borough.

Face Coverings

Due to the increase in cases locally, we are advising a return to wearing face coverings indoors while in school for pupils in Year 7 and above as well as by school staff, including in classrooms where social distancing cannot be maintained. This requirement is an additional measure to support schools to manage the increased risk of school-based transmission.

Ventilation

The virus spreads quickly in enclosed indoor settings, so good ventilation should continue in any indoor setting. Please keep windows and doors open wherever possible.

Vaccinations

We encourage everyone who is eligible and has not had their first vaccination to book an appointment using the national booking portal – www.nhs.uk/covid-vaccination - or by ringing 119. Currently, anyone aged 21 or over can book a vaccination, but we expected that the system will change by the end of this week so that anybody aged 18 or above will also be able to access the booking system.

Evidence is emerging that the second dose of a vaccine offers over 80% protection against the Delta variant whereas the first dose only offers around 30%. In view of this data, it is important anybody who has had their first dose of the vaccination is reminded to have their second dose so that they are as fully protected as possible.

Sports Days

In line with Government advice, Sports Days can continue to take place as long as pupils remain in their bubbles and equipment is cleaned prior to and during the events.

We advise schools not to allow spectators at Sports Days.

School Trips

The Government is asking people to minimise travel in and out of “enhanced support” areas. We are therefore asking schools to consider if trips need to go ahead in view of the potential risks.

Where a school takes a decision to go ahead with a school trip, there must be a stringent risk assessment in place. Even if a trip has already been through the Evolve system, the risk assessment needs to be re-visited. Measures need to be in place to ensure that the integrity of bubbles is preserved and that social distancing from other members of the public is maintained at all times. Schools should consult their health and safety providers as part of such reviews.

Transition Days / Events

We would advise cancelling transition days which involve sending pupils into other schools, and advise schools to look at alternative arrangements to support transition (such as virtual tours).

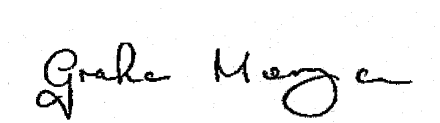
Leavers Events and Proms

In the context of rising cases, schools should consider national guidance and their individual circumstances. Our advice is that such events should not take place before the current target for Step 4 of the national “Road Map” (19 July 2021), and also to bear in mind that this timeframe remains subject to further review by the Government.

We understand that - once again - schools are being asked to change or adapt planning and we appreciate that this can be challenging. However, the current situation in relation to the rise in local cases of the Delta variant is also – once again - serious.

Thank you for all that you are doing for Knowsley children and their families in ensuring that they are provided with the safest and best possible learning environments. Further advice can be sought from your health and safety provider. Link officers are also available for you to consult.

Yours Sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Graham Morgan". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large 'G' and 'M'.

COUNCILLOR GRAHAM MORGAN
Leader of Knowsley Council
Chairperson of the Knowsley Outbreak Management Board