



Covid-19 Rowan School update

NOVEMBER 2021



Covid-19 School update

Introduction

Dear parent/carers, colleagues and governors...

Guidance to schools has been updated to reflect measures in place as a result of the Omicron variant.

The government continues to manage the risk of serious illness from the spread of the virus. The Prime Minister announced on 27th November the temporary introduction of new measures as a result of the Omicron variant. These measures are precautionary, while the variant is tracked and assessed. As a result, the DfE are reflecting these measures in guidance issued to schools, most directly a temporary recommendation on the wearing of face covering in schools and changes to isolation requirements for confirmed and suspected cases of the Omicron variant and their contacts. The advice remains subject to change as the situation develops.

COVID-19 continues to be a virus that we learn to live with and the imperative to reduce the disruption to children and young people's education remains.

The government's priority is for us to deliver face-to-face, high-quality education to all pupils. The evidence is clear that being out of education causes significant harm to educational attainment, life chances, mental and physical health.

We must comply with health and safety law, putting in place and monitoring proportionate control measures. These measures will be fluid and may change from time to time, as the circumstances in our school and the public health advice changes.

This school update explains the actions that school will take to reduce the risk of transmission of coronavirus (COVID-19). This includes public health advice, endorsed by the United Kingdom Health Security Agency (UKHSA), local authority advice, the Department for Education guidance and the school's own context and circumstances.

Yours sincerely,

Carla Ribeiro, Headteacher.



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FAQs

Are staggered times still in place?

No. The school start times have returned to normal in September.

Morning: 9.15am arrival at school

School finishes at 3.10pm

SEND transport, loading buses: 3.10-3.30pm

Can we enter school in the morning with our children?

The children enter through the usual front door and staff from classes continue to 'meet and greet' each child outside on arrival at school. There is no need for parents to enter the building unless it is for a specific purpose such as an arranged meeting or an individual drop off arrangement.

Can my child bring bags, toys and other equipment in addition to what is required?

We ask that additional items are kept to a minimum as this is something that has worked well during the pandemic and will remain in place. Some children will bring personal items to school for a specific reason such as, for travelling on school transport and this will continue to be welcome. Items used for transport from home-school-home will be collected and kept in reception during the school day.

Where will my child be eating their lunch?

Rowan School operates a family dining service. This includes all children, whether they have a packed lunch or school dinner. In September, all children will continue to experience and work towards family dining in individual classrooms. The food will continue to be transported by staff from the kitchen and served to the table in each classroom.



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FAQs

What about activity clubs?

Thursday afternoon clubs have resumed. Children continue accessing Thursday clubs with other children in their and / or a mix of children from different classes. A programme for lunchtime activity clubs has also returned in the Autumn term. Information about activity clubs is shared with parents/carers as part of the daily class email communication.

Will educational visits using the school minibuses be taking place?

Yes, educational visits provision have been back to normal since September, with every class having an allocated and dedicated 'Minibus' learning session each week.

Can my child attend school if they have been identified as a close contact?

Yes:

- children under the age of 18 years old will no longer be required to self-isolate if they are contacted by NHS Test and Trace as a close contact of a positive COVID-19 case. Instead, children will be contacted by NHS Test and Trace, informed they have been in close contact with a positive case and advised to take a PCR test. We would encourage all individuals to take a PCR test if advised to do so. Children advised to take a PCR test can continue attending school, whilst awaiting a test result (provided they remain well).

No:

- All individuals who have been identified as a close contact of a suspected or confirmed case of the Omicron variant of COVID-19, irrespective of vaccination status or age, will be contacted directly and required to self-isolate immediately and asked to book a PCR test. They will be informed by the local health protection team or NHS Test and Trace if they fall into this category and provided details about self-isolation.

Are parents allowed in school now?

Yes, parents can attend meetings and events in school.

If your specific question has not been answered in the FAQs or later in this guidance document, please contact school – thank you.



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Key information

Mixing and 'bubbles'

- It is no longer recommended that children should be kept in consistent groups ('bubbles') and we will not be doing this in school from the autumn term. We also no longer need to make alternative arrangements to reduce mixing in groups for example at lunch and break times.
- As well as enabling flexibility in curriculum delivery, this means that specific interventions, learning sessions, activity clubs or family service in the hall for some children can resume.
- The outbreak management plan and school risk-assessment documents cover the possibility that in our school or local area it may become necessary to reintroduce 'bubbles' for a temporary period, to reduce mixing between groups.
- Any decision to recommend the reintroduction of 'bubbles' would not be taken lightly and would need to take account of the detrimental impact they may have on the delivery of education.

Face coverings

- The DfE have updated their guidance to include that in primary-aged settings, it is recommended that face coverings should be worn by staff and adults (including visitors) when moving around in corridors and communal areas (unless exempt). Face coverings do not need to be worn when outdoors.



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Key information

Tracing close contacts and isolation

- School is no longer involved in contact tracing. Close contacts will now be identified via NHS Test and Trace.
- NHS Test and Trace will work with the positive case to identify close contacts. Contacts from a school setting will only be traced by NHS Test and Trace where the positive case specifically identifies the individual as being a close contact. This is likely to be a small number of individuals who would be most at risk of contracting COVID-19 due to the nature of the close contact. School may be contacted in exceptional cases to help with identifying close contacts, as currently happens in managing other infectious diseases.
- Children under the age of 18 years old and fully vaccinated adults are no longer required to self-isolate if they are identified as a close contact of a positive COVID-19 case.
- Instead, individuals will be contacted by NHS Test and Trace, informed they have been in close contact with a positive case and advised to take a PCR test. We would encourage all individuals to take a PCR test if advised to do so. There are no requirements to self-isolate whilst awaiting test results (unless symptomatic).
- Staff and children who do not need to isolate, who usually attend school, and have been identified as a close contact, should continue to attend school as normal.

From November 2021, an exception to this:

- All individuals who have been identified as a close contact of suspected or confirmed case of the Omicron variant of COVID-19, irrespective of vaccination status and age, will be contacted directly and required to self-isolate immediately and asked to book a PCR test. They will be informed by the local health protection team or NHS Test and Trace if they fall into this category and provided details about self-isolation.

- School will continue to have a role in working with health protection teams in the case of a local outbreak. If there is an outbreak in school or if central government offers the area an enhanced response package, a director of public health might advise school to temporarily reintroduce some additional control measures.



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Key information

Control Measures

These measures include:

- Ensuring good hygiene for everyone.
- Maintaining appropriate cleaning regimes.
- Keeping occupied spaces well ventilated.
- Following public health advice on testing, self-isolation and managing confirmed cases of COVID-19.

1. Ensure good hygiene for everyone

Hand hygiene

- Frequent and thorough hand cleaning should now be regular practice. This will continue to ensure that pupils clean their hands regularly. This can be done with soap and water or hand sanitiser. This will continue to be schedule as part of daily timetables and children will be supported by staff.

Respiratory hygiene

- The 'catch it, bin it, kill it' approach continues to be very important.

Use of personal protective equipment (PPE)

- Most staff in school will not require PPE beyond what they would normally need for their work. There may be occasions where additional PPE may be required such as when coming into contact with a suspected Covid-19 case.

2. Maintain appropriate cleaning regimes, using standard products such as detergents

- School has put in place and maintains an appropriate cleaning schedule. This includes regular and enhanced cleaning of areas and equipment (for example, twice per day), with a particular focus on frequently touched surfaces.

3. Keep occupied spaces well ventilated

- When school is in operation, it is important to ensure it is well ventilated and that a comfortable teaching environment is maintained.
- Checks will be regularly undertaken to identify any poorly ventilated spaces and steps will be taken to improve fresh air flow in these areas, giving particular consideration when holding events where visitors such as parents are on site.
- Opening external windows improves natural ventilation, and in addition, opening internal doors can also assist with creating a throughput of air. If necessary, external opening doors will also be used (if they are not fire doors and where safe to do so).
- School will balance the need for increased ventilation while maintaining a comfortable temperature.



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Key information

Control Measures Continued...

4. Follow public health advice on testing, self-isolation and managing confirmed cases of COVID-19

When an individual develops COVID-19 symptoms or has a positive test

- Pupils, staff and other adults should follow public health advice on when to self-isolate and what to do. They should not come into school if they have symptoms, have had a positive test result or other reasons requiring them to stay at home due to the risk of them passing on COVID-19 (for example, they are required to quarantine).
- If anyone in school develops COVID-19 symptoms, however mild, they will be sent home and they should follow public health advice.
- For everyone with symptoms, they should avoid using public transport and, wherever possible, be collected by a member of their family or household.
- If a pupil is awaiting collection, they will be moved to a room on their own if possible and safe to do so. If possible, a window will be opened for fresh air ventilation.

Appropriate PPE should also be used if close contact is necessary.

Asymptomatic testing – LFD test

- Testing remains important in reducing the risk of transmission of infection within schools. That is why, whilst some measures are relaxed, others will remain, and if necessary, in response to the latest epidemiological data, we all need to be prepared to step measures up or down in future depending on local circumstances.
- Staff should undertake twice weekly home tests whenever they are on site until the end of September, when this will also be reviewed.
- Parents/Carers of primary school aged children are also able and encouraged to test twice weekly using free home test kits until the end of September.

Confirmatory PCR tests

- Staff and pupils with a positive LFD test result should self-isolate in line with the stay at home guidance for households with possible or confirmed coronavirus (COVID-19) infection. They will also need to get a free PCR test to check if they have COVID-19.
 - Whilst awaiting the PCR result, the individual should continue to self-isolate.
 - If the PCR test is taken within 2 days of the positive lateral flow test, and is negative, it overrides the self-test LFD test and the individual can return to school, as long as they don't have COVID-19 symptoms.



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CEV children and staff

- All clinically extremely vulnerable (CEV) children and young people should attend their education setting unless they are one of the very small number of children and young people under paediatric or other specialist care who have been advised by their clinician or other specialist not to attend.
- All clinically extremely vulnerable (CEV) people are advised, as a minimum, to follow the same guidance as everyone else. It is important that everyone adheres to this guidance, but CEV people may wish to think particularly carefully about the additional precautions they can continue to take.
- Social distancing measures have now ended in the workplace, and it is no longer necessary for the government to instruct people to work from home.
- As up to now, leadership will have regular discussions with CEV staff.

Pregnant staff

- School and pregnant staff members will follow the specific guidance for pregnant employees because pregnant women are considered CV.
- Individual pregnancy risk-assessments will be carried out, as per normal practice and procedures.

Other considerations

Contractors

- School will ensure that key contractors are aware of the school's control measures and ways of working.

Carbon dioxide monitors

- The DfE will begin to roll out carbon dioxide monitors to education settings in England, so schools can quickly identify where ventilation may need to be improved.
- Details on when, and how many monitors schools can expect are not available yet. In the first phase, special schools and alternative provision settings will be prioritised.



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Isolation Guidance

- Anyone with COVID-19 symptoms or a positive test result should stay at home and self-isolate immediately. If you have symptoms of COVID-19, you should arrange to have a PCR test as soon as possible. This still applies even if you have received one or more doses of COVID-19 vaccine.
- You are not required to self-isolate if you live in the same household as someone with COVID-19 and any of the following apply:
 - • you are fully vaccinated
 - • you are below the age of 18 years 6 months
 - • you have taken part in or are currently part of an approved COVID-19 vaccine trial
 - • you are not able to get vaccinated for medical reasons
- Fully vaccinated means that you have been vaccinated with an MHRA approved COVID-19 vaccine in the UK, and at least 14 days have passed since you received the recommended doses of that vaccine.
- NHS Test and Trace will contact you to let you know that you have been identified as a contact and check whether you are legally required to self-isolate. If you are not legally required to self-isolate, you will be provided with advice on testing and given guidance on preventing the spread of COVID-19. Even if you do not have symptoms, you will be advised to have a PCR test as soon as possible.
- Even if you are vaccinated, you can still be infected with COVID-19 and pass it on to others. If you are identified as a contact of someone with COVID-19 but you are not required to self-isolate, you can help protect others by following the guidance on how to stay safe and help prevent the spread. As well as getting a PCR test, you may also consider:
 - • limiting close contact with other people outside your household, especially in enclosed spaces
 - • wearing a face covering in enclosed spaces and where you are unable to maintain social distancing
 - • limiting contact with anyone who is clinically extremely vulnerable
 - • taking part in twice weekly LFD testing
- Staff who are identified as close contacts are able to work in school if the following criteria is met:
 - • free of any COVID-19 symptoms
 - • received 2 vaccinations or have a medical exemption - received their final dose at least 14 days prior to contact with a positive case
- The following additional mitigations should take place where staff are to attend work:
 - • the staff member is advised to arrange for a PCR test. However, if a staff member has had Covid-19 infection in the past 90 days, there is no requirement for this.
 - • the staff member should undertake an LFD test every day for 10 days following their last contact with the case (even on days they are not at work), the test(s) should be taken before starting work, and the result should be negative
 - • the staff member should comply with all relevant Covid control measures



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Additional Isolation Guidance – in force from 29th November 2021

- All individuals who have been identified as a close contact of suspected or confirmed case of the Omicron variant of COVID-19, irrespective of vaccination status and age, will be contacted directly and required to self-isolate immediately and asked to book a PCR test. They will be informed by the local health protection team or NHS Test and Trace if they fall into this category and provided details about self-isolation.



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Attendance

- School attendance is mandatory for all pupils of compulsory school age and it is a priority to ensure that as many children as possible regularly attend school.

Parental Attendance

- Parents are able to enter school, please check posters in school entrance and follow measures in place at the school (e.g. face coverings, if applicable)
- Parents' and carers' contact details in case of an emergency must be up to date.

Remote education

- Not all people with COVID-19 have symptoms. Where appropriate, school will support those who need to self-isolate because they have tested positive to work or learn from home if they are well enough to do so along with other pupils needing to isolate.
- School will work collaboratively with families and make individual adjustments to our remote education provision. School will work with individual families as we recognise our pupils are not able to access remote education without adult support, so that our pupils with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) can successfully access remote education appropriate to their level of need.

Pupil and staff wellbeing and support

- Some pupils and staff may be experiencing a variety of emotions in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, such as anxiety, stress or low mood. In addition to class staff, leadership and office staff, school has a dedicated Pupil Well-Being Team, which includes a Home School Link Worker who will work with families to support this. School also has a dedicated Mental Health and Well-Being Team who provide colleagues with well-being advice and support and leadership colleagues in a Pastoral Lead role.

School meals

- School will continue to provide free school meal support to any pupils who are eligible for benefits-related free school meals and who are learning at home during term time.

Educational visits

- School undertakes full and thorough risk assessments in relation to all educational visits and ensures that any public health advice, such as hygiene and ventilation requirements, is included as part of that risk assessment.

Clubs, Swimming, Specialist External providers and activities (including sports, performances and events)

- All enhanced and specialist curriculum provision has returned to normal.
- School undertakes full and thorough risk-assessments in relation to any activities and ensures that any public health advice is included as part of that risk-assessment.



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Outbreak Management

The school will continue to have contingency plans in place - Outbreak Management Plan - which describes what we will do if children or staff test positive for COVID-19, and how we will operate if advised to reintroduce any measures to help break chains of transmission.

The school's Outbreak Management Plan is based on the Contingency framework for managing local outbreaks of COVID-19, provided by the Department of Education (DfE).

We will only implement some, or all, of the measures in the plan in response to recommendations provided by our local authority (LA), director of public health (DsPH), Public Health England (PHE) health protection team or the national government.

It may be necessary to implement these measures in the following circumstances, for example:

- To help manage a COVID-19 outbreak within the school. Actions will be considered when the following threshold is met:
 - There are 2 positive cases among pupils or staff who are likely to have mixed closely within a 10-day period
- To help manage a suspected COVID-19 outbreak within school
- If COVID-19 infection rates in the community are extremely high, and other measures have failed to reduce transmission
- As part of a package of measures responding to a 'variant of concern' (VoC)
- To prevent unsustainable pressure on the NHS

At all times when implementing additional protective measures the school's leaders will follow the advice of the local authority, the Department for Education and Public Health England.



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Outbreak Management

Threshold for outbreak management

- The school will continue to complete a case review document to log and record any positive COVID-19 cases.
- Schools are no longer required to inform the LA Public Health Team or PHE of single cases and do not need to call the DfE helpline to report them.
- DfE will continue to require schools to report case numbers through the daily status form / portal, initially till the end of September.
- Where schools have single cases or cases where we know there is household transmission we are not required to take any action.

Where schools become concerned about cases which are linked and potential transmission in the setting, schools should seek additional support. The threshold provided to schools to help us monitor is - for special schools, residential settings, and settings that operate with 20 or fewer children and staff at any one time:

- 2 positive cases amongst children and staff, who are likely to have mixed closely within a 10-day period

In the event of a local or school outbreak

Parents, carers, pupils and staff will be informed promptly about the introduction of control measures. This will be done via usual communication channels (such as email, SchoolApp, letters sent home with pupils and telephone contact) once a decision has been made.

In summary, the school will reduce contact between groups as before – staff and children will be limited to movement around the school and some/all past COVID-19 prevention measures will be re-introduced.

For example, if recommended, we will limit: educational visits; transition / open days; parents/carers and other visitors coming into school; cross-school sporting events, performances.

For example, if recommended, we will (re)introduce: Testing; bubbles to reducing mixing between groups; face coverings in communal areas for staff and visitors (unless exempt).

Attendance restrictions will only be recommended as a last resort.



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Key documents

[Schools Covid-19 Operational Guidance](#) - last updated 2nd December 2021

[SEND and Specialist Settings: additional Covid-19 Operational Guidance](#) – last updated 2nd December 2021

[Contingency Framework](#) - last updated 16th November 2021

[COVID-19: guidance on protecting people defined on medical grounds as extremely vulnerable](#) – last updated 3rd November 2021

[What parents and carers need to know about early years providers, schools and colleges during COVID-19](#) – last updated 27th September 2021