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To Schools / Education settings

Dear colleague

Schools COVID-19 operational guidance - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk) explains the actions school leaders should take to reduce the risk of transmission of coronavirus (COVID19) in their school, and lists baseline control measures that should be in place in all settings:

1. Ensure good hygiene for everyone.
2. Maintain appropriate cleaning regimes.
3. Keep occupied spaces well ventilated.
4. Face coverings for staff, visitors and students (year 7 and above)
5. Follow public health advice on testing, self-isolation and managing confirmed cases of COVID-19.

In line with the national guidance ('Contingency Framework') [Managing coronavirus \(COVID-19\) in education and childcare settings - GOV.UK \(\[www.gov.uk\]\(http://www.gov.uk\)\)](#), the local authority and schools in Bexley are working together to plan for and respond to cases of COVID-19 amongst staff and students in a way that prioritises the quality of education and support to which students and staff are normally entitled.

At the current time COVID-19 cases in Bexley continue to be high and although case rates are not as high as other areas, we are seeing cases rise markedly in school-age children and this is impacting for students and staff in affected settings. Some schools have started to experience challenges with staffing capacity as a result.

Therefore, I feel introducing a few simple measures to the current baseline measures in settings could help to ensure that children and young people can continue to receive education in as normal a way as possible. In selecting measures, I have carefully considered those which I feel will have minimal impact on education and are effective at reducing risk of transmission.

I am strongly recommending education settings across Bexley consider including the following in their baseline measures, with effect from Monday 6th December 2021:

- Clear messaging and communications to encourage staff, visitors, students (year 7 and above), and their households to undertake twice-weekly lateral flow testing for people without symptoms.
- Daily check-ins with pupils at the start of the school day to ask whether they have been feeling unwell with COVID-19 symptoms.
- Altering the in-person Christmas carol services and performances: allowing children to continue with the performance in schools where they can be filmed or streamed with no one (i.e., parents, friends, family members) coming physically to the premises.
- Encourage staff to social distance.
- Consider reintroducing year group bubbles for play, learning, wrap around care and lunch, depending on the risk assessment done by your setting.
- Household close contacts in KS2 and above who are exempt from isolation and are attending school are encouraged to carry out daily lateral flow testing for 10 days after the onset of symptoms (or positive test if asymptomatic) in the case in their household, and only attend school if their lateral flow test is negative. They are also encouraged to follow national guidance for all contacts and access a PCR test at [COVID-19: guidance for households with possible coronavirus infection - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/covid-19-guidance-for-households-with-possible-coronavirus-infection). People who have tested positive with a PCR test within the last 90 days do not need to be tested.

I hope in time that vaccination of 12-15's will contribute to limiting transmission in settings, but I am aware that no measure is perfect and that a combination of simple measures may be needed over the Winter period. In the first instance, I am recommending education settings consider these additional baseline measures until the end of December.

We look forward to continuing to work closely with Bexley schools to keep our children and young people safe and in education. For further local information about COVID-19 please see the Council website microsite - <https://www.bexley.gov.uk/coronavirus-covid-19>

With thanks and best wishes

Yours sincerely,



Dr. Anjan Ghosh

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