

Reply to Vicky Head  
Ref VH/ltrs/Dec2020  
E-mail Vicky.head@bedford.gov.uk



Date: 15 December 2020

Dear Parent or Carer

### **COVID testing for pupils in secondary schools and their families**

COVID-19 cases in Milton Keynes have been rising rapidly recently, with the highest rates of infection among the 11-18 age group.

As many as 1 in 3 people who have coronavirus have no symptoms and could be spreading it without realising it. It is common for children to either have no symptoms or have mild symptoms that may NOT include the typical symptoms.

I am writing to you to explain how we have arranged for you and your family to get tested now, and also to ask you and your families to limit your social activities to avoid spreading the virus unknowingly.

#### **Access to testing**

We want to identify as many people who are positive for COVID-19 as possible, especially those who may not be displaying typical symptoms (a cough, temperature and a loss/change of taste or sense of smell).

Locally, we have made arrangement for all staff, students and their families who attend secondary schools and colleges to request a home testing kit. You can request a kit for every member of your household online at <https://www.gov.uk/get-coronavirus-test>

I recommend you do this, this week, to help us quickly control the virus.

The test will be the standard test – or the ‘PCR’ test and not the new rapid test. It is separate to the UK Government’s plans to offer rapid testing to pupils in the new year, which is being covered in the news today.

The test will be delivered to your home, you can administer the test yourself and return it following the instructions that come with the test.

Whilst tests are not compulsory, we strongly urge every student, parent and school and college staff to take part as the more people who are tested, the better able we are to contain the virus. If we can break the chain of infections in this way, we can help to reduce the number of COVID-19 cases, limit the number of people who might fall very ill, and protect the NHS.

## What you can do

We all have a part to play in controlling the virus. With the school holidays and festive season approaching it is tempting to not stick to the rules. However, with the high rates of infection and the festive season approaching, it is now more important than ever that we continue to:

- Social distance from anyone we don't live with
- Wash our hands regularly
- Wear a face covering
- Self-isolate if you have symptoms, test positive or are contacted by Test and Trace and asked to isolate

Mixing with other people increases the risk of spreading the virus. Whilst for most young people they only experience mild symptoms of the virus they can pass it on to others who may have underlying conditions or be elderly who are much more likely to be very ill from the virus. This is why it is vitally important that young people limit their social contact with others.

In school, bubbles are formed so that the virus can be contained if someone tests positive. If your child is no longer attending school, they can no longer mix with students who were in their school bubble. They must only have close contact with people they live with or who are in their support bubble.

As we approach the festive season, I urge you and your family to continue to help us keep the virus under control. We can only do this if everyone plays their part.

Vaccinations have begun and there is hope that 2021 will see us all return to some normality but for now, we have to keep up with the efforts to control the virus so that we can protect everyone in our community, particularly those who are most vulnerable.

Yours sincerely



**Vicky Head**

Director of Public Health for Central Bedfordshire, Bedford Borough and Milton Keynes

## Testing FAQs

### How can I access testing through the national testing web portal?

On the website, when prompted you should select:

- “no” to being an essential worker,
- “no” to having symptoms, and
- “no” to being part of a trial or pilot.
- Then select “My local council or health protection team has asked me (or someone I live with) to get a test, even though I do not have symptoms”

Selecting these options will allow you to request a home testing kit for COVID-19

### Should students and staff return to their place of education before they get their test result?

Yes, if you have the test before term ends. As long as they have no symptoms, students and staff who have been tested should continue to attend their place of education while awaiting the result of their test.

### What if I test negative?

A negative test means that you are negative on the day of the test only – it does not guarantee that you will be negative for the whole of the holiday period. It can take several days between being exposed to the virus and the test becoming positive.

If you have been specifically advised to isolate because you are a contact of a case you must continue to isolate even if you test negative.

### What should I do if I test positive?

If you have received a positive test result you, and your household must self-isolate, this is the only way to guarantee you won't pass COVID-19 to others.

If you are told to isolate, you should go home and start self-isolating straight away.

Self-isolation is one of the most important things we can do to help stop the spread of the virus and protect our friends and family, our community and the NHS.

For help and support to self-isolate please visit <https://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk>

You will also be contacted by NHS Test & Trace – please provide them with the information requested so that we identify your contacts and contain the virus. If a student or staff member tests positive it is important to notify the school so that close contacts in the educational setting can be identified and asked to self-isolate.

Don't forget to let school/college know that you have tested positive including the date you took the test.