



3 June 2021

Dear Parent/ Guardian

COVID-19 variant and additional testing for some students

I am writing to you on the request of Public health England, following the two recent COVID-19 cases which we have had to let you know about this week.

To help prevent spread of the coronavirus, Public Health England (PHE) is monitoring cases, particularly new variants. This is helping PHE to gain a better understanding of how different variants spread, and any impact they may have on the effectiveness of the COVID-19 vaccine. The more cases of the variant found, the better the chances are that it can be suppressed.

Public Health England (PHE) has identified a small number of cases of the variant VOC 21-APR-02 in people associated with Maiden Erlegh School in Reading. As a result, PHE have advised additional testing at the school. At this point the risk of further cases is low and **additional PCR testing is being offered as a precaution for some students based on the PHE risk assessment** to find out if this variant has spread more widely amongst students as well as household contacts of the individual. **You will be notified in a separate letter if you are being invited to conduct additional testing.** If information changes and wider testing is required, we will be in touch again.

There is currently no evidence to suggest that this variant causes more serious illness than other variants. However, this variant is at least as transmissible (more easily spreads from person to person) as the variant first identified in Kent, possibly more so. Tracking and controlling the spread of this variant is therefore important from a public health point of view.

PHE has advised that all students and staff, regardless of year group, to remain vigilant regarding Covid-19. All parents are advised to continue with the routine twice weekly asymptomatic LFD testing of all students, in all year groups. Any students developing positive tests on an LFD should seek a PCR test for confirmation. Any students developing symptoms should seek a PCR test as usual through NHS testing services.

Feedback from PHE has been very positive about the measures we have taken to ensure the safety of our staff and students on site, and we are further reassured by the steps being taken by PHE to enable additional testing at this time.

Public health advice remains the same – remembering 'Hands, Face, Space and Fresh Air' as we meet others outside will help protect against all Covid-19 variants.

What to do if your child develops symptoms of COVID 19

If your child develops symptoms of COVID-19, they must not come to school and should remain at home for at least **10 days** from the date when their symptoms appeared. Anyone with symptoms will be eligible for a PCR test (the normally available test type) and this can be arranged via <https://www.nhs.uk/ask-for-a-coronavirus-test> or by calling 119.

All other household members who remain well, must stay at home and not leave the house for 10 days. This includes anyone in your 'Support Bubble'.

Further information is available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-stay-at-home-guidance/stay-at-home-guidance-for-households-with-possible-coronavirus-covid-19-infection>

The household isolation period includes the day the first person in your household's symptoms started (or the day their test was taken if they did not have symptoms) and the next 10 full days. This means that if, for example, your 10 day isolation period starts on the 15th of the month, your isolation period ends at 23:59 hrs on the 25th and you can return to your normal routine.

Household members should not go to work, school or public areas and exercise should be taken within the home.

If you require help with buying groceries, other shopping or picking up medication, or walking a dog, you should ask friends or family. Alternatively, you can order your shopping online and medication by phone or online.

Household members staying at home for 10 days will greatly reduce the overall amount of infection the household could pass on to others in the community

If you are able, move any vulnerable individuals (such as the elderly and those with underlying health conditions) out of your home, to stay with friends or family for the duration of the home isolation period.

Symptoms

The most common symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19) are recent onset of:

- a new continuous cough
- a high temperature
- a loss of, or change in, your normal sense of taste or smell (anosmia)

For most people, coronavirus (COVID-19) will be a mild illness.

If your child does develop symptoms, you can seek advice from the nhs.uk website at <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/check-if-you-have-coronavirus-symptoms/>. If you are concerned about your child's symptoms, or they are worsening you can seek advice from NHS 111 at <https://111.nhs.uk/> or by phoning 111.

How to stop COVID-19 spreading

There are things you can do to help reduce the risk of you and anyone you live with getting ill with COVID-19

Do

- wash your hands with soap and water often – do this for at least 20 seconds
- use hand sanitiser gel if soap and water are not available
- wash your hands as soon as you get home
- cover your mouth and nose with a tissue or your sleeve (not your hands) when you cough or sneeze
- put used tissues in the bin immediately and wash your hands afterwards

Further Information

Further information is available at <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/>

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mr A Johnson', with a horizontal line extending to the right.

Mr A Johnson
Headteacher