

Dear Parents,

COVID rates in Wirral remain very low and we are currently the lowest across Cheshire and Merseyside. Thankfully, our cases in educational settings also remain extremely low. However, as predicted and expected (with the easing of lockdown restrictions), there are signs of increasing cases across Cheshire and Merseyside. You will also be very aware of the high rates in several areas across the North West.

Across the UK, we currently have 5 Variants of Concern (VOCs) and 8 VUIs (Variants of Investigation), so managing variants will be an inevitable part of life as we go forward. You will be aware that the main VOC at present is that of the Indian Variant, which is now expected to become the dominant strain for many areas. For Wirral, we currently have very low numbers of confirmed Indian variant cases, but this is being closely monitored and there is also a delay of a few days between someone being confirmed positive via PCR and us knowing whether they have a VOC or not.

[To help all families we would like to share the important information below:](#)

FOR PRIMARY SCHOOLS AND EARLY YEARS:

While younger children are not routinely tested, testing is available should parents wish to take it up. Parents can also test themselves as an indicator of whether there is a likelihood of COVID being transmitted among the family. If anyone tests positive, the household should isolate immediately, inform the school/early years setting and book a PCR test.

FOR ALL EDUCATIONAL SETTINGS, PLEASE ALSO NOTE THE FOLLOWING:

With the warmer weather and increased pollen levels, it's important for people to understand the difference between the symptoms of hay fever and COVID-19.

While the symptoms of coronavirus and hay fever can overlap, people with hay fever don't experience a high temperature and most won't feel unwell. But hay fever can play tricks on your sense of smell and give you a sore throat. If you suffer with hay fever, make sure you are regularly tested for COVID-19 to be on the safe side.

REMINDERS FOR PARENTS/CARERS:

- If a parent or carer is experiencing one of the 3 main COVID symptoms and is waiting for the results of a PCR test, they should NOT send their children into schools while they are awaiting the results. If a parent/carers is waiting for a PCR result, both they and their children could potentially be infectious and therefore the children should not be attending school while the parent is waiting for their test result. If the parent receives a negative PCR result, their children can return to school. If the parent/carers receives a positive result, they and their family members have to self-isolate for the full 10 days.
- Parents/carers should be reminded NOT to use home LFDs to test whether symptomatic primary-age children have COVID or not. While convenient to use these at home, the difficulty in carrying out a nasal and throat swab with a young child means that the test results are often not valid. Also, everyone who has at least one of the 3 main COVID symptoms (high temperature, new continuous cough, loss of taste/and/or smell) should have a PCR test. If parents have a symptomatic child, they need to book a supervised PCR test (see www.wirral.gov.uk for local details)