

5 February 2022

Dear parents and guardians,

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your continued support during what has been yet another challenging term. As expected, the rapid spread of the new Omicron variant of Covid-19 gave rise to very high levels of cases and our special schools were no exception.

Following the Christmas break, our special schools have been working very hard to manage the rapid spread of Omicron cases of Covid-19 whilst trying to keep as many children in school as possible. Maximising the number of children and young people with SEND in face-to-face education and minimising any disruption in a way that best manages the Covid-19 risk is still our main goal. I cannot thank staff and families enough for supporting us with this.

As you will be aware the government recently announced that England will return to Plan A on Thursday 27 January 2022. Rates of Covid-19 nationally are seeing a downward trend and although we are seeing a slight decline within Lancashire, we are still seeing high numbers of cases and outbreaks within our education settings.

We will therefore continue to support and advise special schools locally in situations where **the number of positive cases substantially increases, and additional measures are needed to mitigate risk of transmission within the school.**

Considering this, we would like to emphasise some key points to help manage transmission in special schools:

- Notify the school as soon as possible if your child has had a positive Covid-19 test.
- Make sure if your child has symptoms of Covid-19 they isolate and book a test immediately, then follow the advice given when you get the result.
- If your child has other symptoms or is not feeling well enough to attend school, then they must stay away from school until they are well enough and see medical care from the NHS as appropriate. If in doubt, you can book a PCR test online by clicking the option that says: "No, they do not currently have symptoms" and when asked "why are you asking for a test?" select: "I've been told to get a test by my local council, health protection team or healthcare professional."

If the result is positive your child will need to isolate as per guidance.

- Continue with routine twice weekly lateral flow testing at home if possible.

If you have previously received a positive Covid-19 test result, you are advised not to take another PCR test within 90 days of this result unless:

- you develop any new main symptoms of Covid-19
- you are required to take a PCR test for travel into or out of the UK
- you are advised to take a follow-up PCR test after a positive LFD test

In **exceptional circumstances where cases continue to increase**, Government guidance enables us to apply additional measures on a temporary basis so this may include:

- stopping face-to-face assemblies and activities in some special schools and year groups where we have an outbreak and to deliver virtually in school where possible
- advising staff, and visitors to wear face masks in corridors when moving between lessons and on public transport where appropriate (does not apply to children who have LCC transport provided or those who may be exempt)
- requesting daily LFD testing (7 days) for close contacts so pupils can attend school unless they have tested positive for Covid-19 or are symptomatic. (We are currently piloting LAMP (spit) testing within some SEN schools and if necessary, we can supply kits to school where children may require testing kits which may be easier to use if child has specific needs, please discuss with your school)
- Further measures and restrictions based on school's risk assessment and public health advice

If you are asked by your school to undertake any of the above measures as part of outbreak management, this is to help prevent the spread of Covid-19 and keep our children and families safe. Covid-19 is still here, and we need your continued support and understanding in protecting our special schools, families and communities. Please also be kind to staff, who are doing everything they can to keep our children safe and in the classroom.

We understand that people are tired and just want to return to normal but living with Covid-19 doesn't mean we should ignore it altogether – it means we need to learn to live safely with the virus.

If you have any questions about these measures, please contact the school office.

Yours sincerely



**Dr Sakthi Karunanithi**  
**Director of Public Health**