

21 January 2022

Public Health

Portsmouth City Council,
Civic Offices,
Guildhall Square,
Portsmouth.
PO1 2EP

Dear Colleague

COVID-19 MITIGATIONS IN PORTSMOUTH SCHOOLS

You will have seen from the latest coronavirus information that overall levels of infection are dropping from the extremely high rates that we have seen over the last few weeks. However within this overall encouraging picture, as you will be only too aware, levels of infection amongst children, including the under 5s, remain high, and infection rates amongst younger children have been rising very rapidly. Over the last week we have been alerted to more outbreak situations within primary schools (including infant and junior schools) than at any point in the pandemic.

I know that many of you will therefore be concerned about the relaxations announced by the government this week, including the removal of the requirement for adults and secondary age pupils to wear face coverings in communal areas and when moving around school buildings which takes effect in the middle of next week.

In the light of the changes nationally I am writing now to reconfirm my support and encouragement to any school which have cases of coronavirus in the community to go above and beyond the "standard" mitigations recommended by DFE.

These might include:

- Continuing to ask adults and secondary aged pupils to wear face coverings in communal areas in the school;
- Encouraging parents to wear face coverings when collecting or dropping off their children if social distancing cannot be maintained;
- Taking steps to limit mixing between classes/ year groups where this can be done without adversely affecting curriculum delivery, and reintroducing "bubbles" where there is an outbreak in a particular group;
- Keeping under review events with parents and considering delaying these or moving these on line. The recommendation against in person events that I made before Christmas will no longer apply from 27 January.

It is possible that some parents may be unsure about the rationale for continuing to have additional mitigations in place in schools in the light of this week's announcements. You may wish to share this letter, or the contents of it, with your parents, to explain why it is so

important that we continue to have measures in place to reduce transmission amongst children who have not generally yet had the opportunity to become fully vaccinated.

Yours Faithfully

A handwritten signature in grey ink, appearing to read 'HA', followed by a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Helen Atkinson FFPH
Director of Public Health
Portsmouth City Council