



BLACKMINSTER MIDDLE SCHOOL

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Dear parents and carers,

The following information is taken from the Department for Education's (DfE's) email to school leaders on Monday 21st February. As you will see, the government have removed the guidance on twice-weekly testing for staff and students, and also the requirement to self-isolate in cases of COVID-19. Adults and children who have COVID-19 are still advised to stay at home and avoid contact with others for five full days, however, and we strongly encourage all members of our school communities to follow this advice to ensure the safety of our students, staff and their families.

I will, of course, write to you again should any further guidance be issued.

Kind regards,

Linda McQuone
Executive Headteacher

Prime Minister's announcement on the Living with COVID-19 plan

On Monday 21st February, the Prime Minister set out the next phase of the government's COVID-19 response '[Living with COVID-19](#)'. COVID-19 continues to be a virus that we learn to live with and the imperative to reduce the disruption to children and young people's education remains. Further information on what this means for education and childcare settings and children's social care services is below.

Changes to testing in education

From Monday 21 February, the Government is removing the guidance for staff and students in most education and childcare settings to undertake twice-weekly asymptomatic testing. Given we now know that the risks of severe illness from COVID-19 in most children and most fully vaccinated adults are very low, and our successful vaccination programme has achieved a high rate of take-up, we can remove this advice, bringing education into line with wider society.

Changes to self-isolation and daily testing of close contacts

From Thursday 24 February, the Government will remove the legal requirement to self-isolate following a positive test. Adults and children who test positive will continue to be advised to stay at home and avoid contact with other people for at least 5 full days, and then continue to follow the guidance until they have received 2 negative test results on consecutive days. In addition, the Government will:



- No longer ask fully vaccinated close contacts and those aged under 18 to test daily for 7 days, and remove the legal requirement for close contacts who are not fully vaccinated to self-isolate.
- End self-isolation support payments, national funding for practical support and the medicine delivery service will no longer be available.
- End routine contact tracing. Contacts will no longer be required to self-isolate or advised to take daily tests. Staff, children and young people should attend their education settings as usual. This includes staff who have been in close contact within their household, unless they are able to work from home.
- End the legal obligation for individuals to tell their employers when they are required to self-isolate.

More detail can be found in the [Living with COVID-19](#) plan published today.

Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) advice on COVID-19 vaccination for healthy 5 to 11 year olds

The [NHS is currently offering](#) vaccines to at-risk children and those who live with immunosuppressed people in this age group. Parents and guardians of at risk 5 to 11 year olds should wait for the NHS to contact them, with local NHS teams already contacting those who are eligible.

On Wednesday 16 February, the government accepted [the advice](#) from the independent JCVI to make a non-urgent offer of COVID-19 vaccines to all children aged 5 to 11 in England.

The JCVI advice follows a thorough review by the UK's independent medicines regulator, the MHRA, which approved Pfizer's paediatric vaccine, as safe and effective for children aged 5 to 11.

Children without underlying health conditions are at low risk of serious illness from COVID-19 and the priority remains for the NHS to offer vaccines and boosters to older age groups and vulnerable children, as well as to catch-up with other childhood immunisation programmes.

The NHS will prepare to extend this non-urgent offer to all children during April so parents can, if they want, take up the offer to increase protection against potential future waves of COVID-19, as we learn to live with this virus.

