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Dear Primary School Headteacher / CEO,

The removal of Plan B measures and the return to Plan A will be welcomed by some and may cause concern for others, and you will likely experience a spectrum of views from families in your school community.

As we started to see Omicron variant in Doncaster, there were unknowns around how infectious the new variant would be and how likely it would be to cause serious illness. It has been five weeks since we saw the first Omicron case in Doncaster and although the variant has spread rapidly, we have not seen a corresponding rise in the number of people becoming very unwell. Even as cases have risen in people aged over 60, where we are most likely to see more serious illness, most cases have been mild or with no symptoms. This week, we have seen some of the lowest numbers of people in ITU (fewer than 5), despite having the highest rates of infections in recent weeks.

The national and local take up of vaccination and booster vaccination has given a good level of protection, both in terms of preventing new infections and reducing severity of illness.

As we have seen in previous waves of infection, Doncaster often maintains a higher rate of infections for a longer period than the England average and we may see case rates level off at a higher rate as plan B measures come off. We will continue to monitor case rates and impact on the health and care system.

We know cases in some Primary School settings remain high and are continuing to rise and I would like to reassure you that we will continue to support schools in the use of their contingency plans in outbreak situations.

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. Our priority is for schools to deliver face-to-face, high-quality education to all pupils. The evidence is clear that being out of education causes significant harm to educational attainment, life chances, mental and physical health. In outbreak situations, additional measures may be advised.

Testing and self isolation

I want to take this opportunity to remind you of the current testing and self-isolation guidance.
Please feel free to share this with your school community.

Cases: Any pupil or staff member with new Covid-19 symptoms should arrange **PCR testing** and not attend the school site.

Anyone who DOES NOT have any symptoms of Covid-19 but tests positive on an LFD test does not need to get a follow-up PCR test. They must register their LFD test on the Government website and self-isolate immediately. **Please note that anyone who needs to claim the £500 support payment will still need a PCR test.**

Self-isolation advice for people who have tested positive for Covid-19 has changed. It is now possible to end self-isolation after 5 days, following 2 negative LFD tests taken 24 hours apart. Those who have 2 consecutive negative tests on day 5 and 6 can return to work or school as long as they do not have a temperature.

If LFD tests are still positive on day 10, we are advising locally that the person should continue to isolate and take a daily LFD test, if a negative test is received on days 11, 12, 13 or 14, the person can return to school. If your LFD test is still positive on day 14, you can stop isolating the following day. This will be reviewed as we understand how likely people are to remain infectious beyond 10 days.

Close contacts: for close contacts, including household contacts of someone who has tested positive:

Vaccinated persons and children - Any persons aged under 18 years and 6 months and those fully vaccinated are strongly advised to take an LFD test every day for 7 days and continue to attend their setting as normal, unless they have a positive test result. This daily test should be completed before the person leaves the household for the first time that day. If any of these test results are positive, the person should self-isolate.

Our local advice is that if you are a close contact and cannot get hold of an LFD test to test daily please isolate.

People who are not fully vaccinated - Any adults who not fully vaccinated and living in the same household as someone with Covid-19 are legally required to stay at home and self-isolate. Fully vaccinated is defined as 14 days after having received 2 doses of an approved vaccine. This applies only to people ages 18 years and 6 months or above.

Information about local support for self-isolation is available [here](#), including a phone number for people who need additional support in self-isolation.

Prevention measures

A number of measures remain in place including twice weekly LFD testing, hand hygiene, ventilation and cleaning regimes. Schools are not expected to operate a bubble system or complete contact tracing in most situations.

Effective ventilation continues to be key in preventing and reducing the impact of an outbreak of COVID-19. A small number of ventilation units are being provided nationally through an application process.

LFD (asymptomatic) testing – School staff, secondary aged pupils and household members of any school age child should continue with twice weekly home testing. LFD testing is most effective at identifying people with the virus when they are at their most infectious period.

I would like to stress how important twice weekly LFD testing is and the importance of reporting all LFD results online. This enables us to effectively monitor and track case rates and situations within school settings and the wider community. **If you could share this message with your school community that would be appreciated.**

Vaccination - Continue to promote vaccination to all who are eligible.

Contingency plans / outbreak management plans

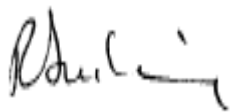
Contingency plans / Outbreak management plans may include:

- Use of face coverings in communal areas by staff and visitors, unless exempt. This will be a **short term measure** on recommendation by the Director of Public Health in an outbreak situation.
- Using cohorting 'bubbles' for a temporary period, to reduce mixing between groups
- Limiting visitors to the school
- Further encouraging of twice weekly LFD testing for parents and, for children over 5 years of age who are close contacts, daily LFD tests for a period of 7 days.

The national guidance is changing regularly so please do keep up to date and check the latest via www.gov.uk/coronavirus

Thank you again for all that you have been doing to protect your school community, their families, and the wider community. It has not gone unnoticed and please remember that myself and wider education team are here to support if you have any queries or concerns.

Kind regards,



Dr Rupert Suckling
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