

Public Health

11 June 2021

Dear Parent / Carer / Student

Re: Use of face coverings in secondary school and further education

Thank you for your ongoing support during the pandemic.

Over the past two weeks the number of Walsall residents testing positive for COVID-19 has significantly increased. COVID-19 surveillance has detected a number of cases of the Delta (B.1.617.2) variant in the borough.

It has already been documented by Public Health England that the Delta variant is more transmissible than previous strains. The public health on-call team has also seen an increase in calls where young people attending school or college have contributed to the spread of the virus.

As a precautionary move, the Walsall Council is now advising that secondary school and further education settings in Walsall re-introduce the use of face coverings for:

- All students aged 12 and over in classrooms and communal areas, [unless exempt](#);
- All staff and visitors in classrooms and communal areas, [unless exempt](#).

The national position is also that face coverings must continue to be worn on school and public transport.

Alongside the protective measures in place to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in schools, we have taken this decision to ensure that we are providing both students and staff with this further layer of protection. We hope that you understand the need for additional caution at this time and please can you support this request for your child / children to wear a face covering during secondary school / college hours.

It is also important that you, as a family, continue with twice weekly symptom free testing and report the results to the NHS. One in three people have the virus but show no symptoms so this will reduce the risk of COVID-19 spreading in schools. This type of testing plays an important role in helping to get our lives back to normal.

It is important to report your results straight away, even if it is negative or invalid. It's easy to do online at <https://www.gov.uk/report-covid19-result> or by calling 119 (free from mobiles and landlines). Lines are open every day, 7am to 11pm.

If you are unsure how to use the symptom free tests or record results then you can visit one of Walsall's community or pharmacy testing sites and the trained staff can offer support. More information can be found on the Council website. https://go.walsall.gov.uk/covid-19_information/covid-19_-_testing_information



As a reminder – if you or your child have any of the COVID-19 symptoms you should not send them into school or college. Everyone in your household must self-isolate and the person who has symptoms should book a PCR test through the NHS. The symptoms are still: a new, persistent cough, a temperature, a change in sense of smell or taste.

We appreciate that changing COVID-19 guidance can sometimes be challenging to absorb but as a borough we must do everything we can to stop infection rates rising and protect our communities.

We know that our tried and tested COVID-19 safety messages are probably very familiar by now, but nonetheless please continue to wash and sanitise your hands regularly, wear a face covering, keep your distance from anyone you do not live with and continue to let fresh air in. It will make a difference in the continuing fight against COVID-19.

We are now vaccinating anyone in Walsall aged 25 or over. You can walk in to get your first COVID-19 vaccination at the Saddlers Vaccination Centre in Walsall between 8am and 6pm any day of the week - no appointment needed.

We will continue to keep the situation under review and will inform schools as soon as our local guidance changes.

Thank you again for your continued support.

Kind regards,

Stephen Gunther
Director of Public Health

Sharon Kelly
Director Access and Inclusion