

Date: 22 October 2020

To all headteachers, school staff, parents and pupils

You will be aware that Cheshire East has been categorised high risk and is therefore required to comply with tier 2 restrictions. We want to work with all our schools and families to continue to reduce the risk of transmission in our schools so that we can minimise the number of pupils and staff who need to isolate due to close contact and ensure we keep our schools open.

We are working closely with schools to ensure they are supported with mitigations that will support reducing transmission of the virus and where there is a positive case we take swift action with school leaders to identify those that **MUST** isolate and at the same time ensure that remote education is in place to support pupils not in school. Our schools are working hard to continue the education of all children and young people, but this brings increased pressure and challenges to staff who are often supporting a mix of children in and out of school.

We are very aware of the impact of children not being in schools on essential health and care providers, the local economy and livelihoods of residents and we try hard to balance this with the priority to keep our schools safe, enable them to remain open and the impact on the wellbeing and education of our children and young people.

I am sure we all want to work together to minimise the potential of Cheshire East escalating to Tier 3 measures and therefore we want to reinforce the importance that we all comply with:

- Good hygiene – frequent washing of hands and cleaning of surfaces
- Keeping good social distancing – 2 metres wherever possible.
- Reducing the spread of the virus by wearing face masks/coverings where we are advised to do so, unless exempt.
- In settings where pupils in year 7 and above are educated, face coverings should be worn by adults and pupils when moving around the premises, outside of classrooms, such as in corridors and communal areas where social distancing cannot easily be maintained.
- In primary schools where social distancing is not possible in indoor areas outside of classrooms between members of staff or visitors.
- Wearing face coverings on school transport will be compulsory from 2 November for all children and young people aged 11 and over on all dedicated school transport, unless exempt.
- If you have any covid symptoms you **MUST** isolate immediately and get a test.

We advise schools look at teacher contact with pupils and social distancing and keep this to 2m wherever possible. Good practice is where teachers remain at the front of the classroom. We appreciate this is not possible with very young children or some children with additional needs but in these circumstances, staff should wear appropriate PPE. This will help with reducing transmission of the virus and could reduce the number of classes who MUST self-isolate if there is a positive case.

We are confident that all schools have effective measures in place, but we will continue to work with schools to strengthen these where we can, and it is appropriate based on Public Health advice. We are continually monitoring where positive cases occur and developing enhanced measures we can take where we see any linked transmissions or outbreaks in schools.

As we enter the winter flu season, we strongly encourage that if you have any covid symptoms you arrange a test immediately and do not assume this is a winter cold/flu. As we need to identify where this may be a positive case as soon as possible to enable you to isolate and reduce transmission.

As we approach half term we ask all school staff and parents and pupils to consider their social interactions during the school holidays and diligently comply with the restrictions and guidance on hands, face and space. We know that currently most transmission in Cheshire East is in the community and we need to minimise further possible cases in schools after the school holiday due to transmission in the community over the school holiday.

Finally, we want to thank all school staff, pupils and parents for working with the Local Authority and cooperating with the guidance and advice that we have provided. It is important we work together to keep our schools safe and reduce transmission of the virus in schools so that we can minimise the number of staff and pupils who need to go home to isolate and ultimately keep our schools open.

Yours sincerely



Jacky Forster, Director of Education and Skills



Cllr Kathryn Flavell, Portfolio Holder for Children and Families



Mark Palethorpe, Executive Director of People



Matt Tyrer, Director of Public Health