OFFICIAL

Education, Participation and Skills
Plymouth City Council
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www.plymouth.gov.uk

Date 10 December 2021   My Ref   Your Ref

Dear Parents / Carer and Families

We would like to thank you for your ongoing support in helping your child's school continue to provide learning in school during these difficult times.

In Plymouth we are currently seeing very large numbers of students testing positive or needing to self-isolate, which reflects the high COVID-19 rates in the city, which are well above the average for England.

As we move toward Christmas and mid-winter, it is unlikely that these challenges will reduce as viruses spread easily at this time of year.

As you will know, the Government has also announced new measures this week to reduce the spread of the Omicron variant, which is known to be very easily transmitted.

We know that you will be concerned about disruption to your child's education and about the impact of COVID-19 on your family.

Schools are working incredibly hard to stay open and provide a safe environment for their students. We would like to share some things you can do to keep your family safe and to support your school community:

- Please be understanding with staff when they have to implement measures to keep the school community safe. They are doing a great job in keeping learning in schools going under significant pressures linked to COVID-19. Schools must follow Government guidance on managing COVID-19 and work with the Department for Education, UK Health Security Agency (formerly Public Health England) and local Public Health teams and local authority education officers.

- Ensure your child does not attend school if they have any COVID-19 symptoms and immediately arrange a PCR test. They must stay at home for 10 days and not attend school if they have a positive test.

- Make sure the entire family take regular lateral flow tests. This is one of the most important measures we can take to ensure schools can stay open. Every person that tests positive is likely to reduce the chance of infection to multiple others. Even managing the rate at which the infection spreads can help avoid possible closure where too many pupils and staff have become unwell at the same time.

- Make sure the entire family follows advice on wearing face coverings.

- Ensure everyone in your household gets the vaccine – and the booster – when they are eligible in order to protect them from serious disease.

While schools are working hard to stay open and minimise the risks to pupils and staff, they cannot control what happens in the community, where many COVID-19 transmissions happen through family contact at home, meeting friends and social activity outside school.

This makes it important for us all to think about what we all do outside of school, including wearing face coverings, only meeting indoors in well ventilated spaces and washing hands.

We know we had all hoped that coronavirus would be behind us by now but it continues to evolve and give us new challenges. We can keep safe and ensure our children can continue to learn in school if we all keep supporting each other and help schools with the difficult work and decisions they need to make every day.

Yours sincerely

Dr Ruth Harrell
Director of Public Health for Plymouth

Ming Zhang
Service Director (Education, Participation and Skills)