



Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council

Education and Inclusion Service Directorate

CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19): FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQs) FOR PARENTS/CARERS

VERSION 22 – 17/02/22

Mae'r ddogfen yma ar gael yn y Gymraeg/This document is available in Welsh.

INTRODUCTION

This guidance is intended to support parents and carers in relation to the operational arrangements of Rhondda Cynon Taf schools.

These FAQs are informed by Welsh Government guidance:

<https://gov.wales/schools-coronavirus-guidance>

<https://gov.wales/school-operations-coronavirus>

GENERAL QUESTIONS

1. How are risks to children, teachers and families managed?

All schools have undertaken risk assessments to directly address risks associated with coronavirus (COVID-19) so that sensible measures can be put in place to minimise those risks for children, young people and staff.

COVID-19 has not gone away, and the most important measure to take is to ensure symptomatic people waiting for PCR test results or those that have tested positive do not attend school. Reducing close interactions between individuals is still important in helping to control its spread, hence, to prevent the spread of coronavirus (COVID-19), schools are using a range of protective measures to create safer environments in which the risk of spreading the virus is substantially reduced. Whilst such changes may look different in each setting, they are determined by individual circumstances and risk levels, and are all designed to minimise risks to children, staff and their families. They include:-

- Reminding all staff and learners to follow the Welsh Government guidance for self-isolation and household isolation as appropriate.



- Staff and learners not attending school if they have any of the classic COVID-19 symptoms (i.e. a new continuous cough, or a high temperature or loss of or change to their sense of taste or smell).
- Staff and learners who test positive for COVID-19 not attending school.
- Close contacts of positive COVID-19 individuals taking daily lateral flow tests to be able to attend school, i.e. All over 18s who are fully vaccinated (having received two full doses of an approved vaccine or one dose of the Janssen vaccine) and learners aged 5 to 17 taking lateral flow tests every day for 7 days (or until 10 days since the last contact with the person who tested positive for COVID-19 if this is earlier) if they are contacts of someone who has tested positive for COVID-19 (Contact only needs to self-isolate if they themselves have a positive lateral flow test or develop symptoms).
- Unvaccinated staff and learners aged 18 and above who are a close contact of someone (household or otherwise) who has symptoms or has tested positive for COVID-19 not attending school, but self-isolating for a 10-day period.
- Ensuring regular handwashing, social distancing and good respiratory hygiene by promoting the 'catch it, bin it, kill it' approach.
- Ensuring adequate ventilation by opening windows or adjusting ventilation systems.
- Using carbon dioxide (CO₂) monitors issued by Welsh Government to assist in the management of ventilation.
- Ensuring that staff and learners who become symptomatic during the school day are sent home, self-isolate and take a test.
- Encouraging staff to maintain physical distance from other staff.
- Encouraging staff to maintain physical distancing from learners as much as possible (recognising that this may not be possible with younger learners or some learners with ALN);
- Supporting older learners to maintain physical distancing wherever possible;
- Ensuring cleaning regimes are appropriate.
- Active engagement with Test, Trace, Protect.
- The wearing of face coverings by staff and secondary school learners (see question 10 below).

2. Is it compulsory for my child to attend school?

All children are required to attend school unless they are self-isolating or there are other reasons for absence.

You should notify your child's school as normal if your child is unable to attend so that staff are aware of any sickness absence and can discuss this with you.



3. Should I keep my child at home if they have an underlying health condition, or live with someone in a clinically vulnerable group, or if I am anxious about my child returning to school?

Any parent who has medical concerns about their child should seek and follow medical advice provided by their local GP or guidance from Public Health Wales.

Every school will continue to carry out risk assessments and put in place controls to minimise risks, such as frequent hand washing, surface hygiene and adequate ventilation.

Parents/carers of learners with significant risk factors who are concerned can discuss such concerns with the school and the school will explain the measures in place to reduce the risk and provide the required reassurance.

All pupils of compulsory school age **must** attend school unless a statutory reason applies (for example, the pupil has been granted a leave of absence, is unable to attend because of sickness, is self-isolating, is absent for a necessary religious observance, etc.).

To provide an additional level of safeguarding to individuals who have higher clinical risks, any staff member who is identified as a contact (household or otherwise) of an individual who has tested positive for COVID-19 must agree to undertake a specific regime as set out in <https://gov.wales/children-and-young-people-higher-clinical-risk-and-clinically-extremely-vulnerable-adults-guidance>

Further, staff in special schools (regardless of their vaccination status or previous infection with COVID-19) are strongly encouraged to take a lateral flow test (LFT), every day before they attend work. Daily testing in this way is more likely to identify those people who may be infectious, without showing symptoms, and before they leave home to start work. This will in turn help protect children and other staff members.

Fully vaccinated staff working in special educational provision who are contacts of a positive COVID-19 case are not required to self-isolate but should continue to take daily lateral flow tests and must have a negative PCR test before they return to work.

4. What are the arrangements for pupils with Additional Learning Needs (ALN)

Practical and flexible approaches are considered as part of the school's risk assessments to ensure individual needs are met in relation to learners with ALN.



At times when schools are not advised to maintain contact groups, some schools may wish to tailor provision for some pupils with ALN as a result of specific health needs identified as part of the risk assessment process.

Schools should continue to consult parents and carers about specific support needs, and agreeing the way forward for specific learners.

SCHOOL BUILDINGS

5. Are there adequate hand-washing facilities for staff and pupils?

Pupils and staff are encouraged to wash or sanitise their hands upon arrival at school/when leaving school and regularly throughout the day, especially before and after handling food, when using the toilet facilities and when someone has sneezed or coughed.

Plentiful supplies of hand soap and hand sanitiser are available throughout all school buildings.

6. How often are schools being cleaned?

Cleaning regimes are appropriate and in line with standards to control COVID and other communicable diseases. If advice is received from the Test, Trace and Protect (TTP) Service that additional cleaning measures are required in any school, those arrangements are in place and will be undertaken to further reduce risk of transmission.

7. What if a parent/carer wants to enter the school building to speak to a teacher?

No parents/carers will be permitted within any school building unless they have a pre-arranged visit. Should teacher/parent contact be required, this should be by appointment and arrangements for audio and/or video communication explored as an alternative.

External visitors to the school will be admitted by pre-arranged appointment only and should follow the school's COVID safety requirements.



THE SCHOOL DAY

8. How are contacts identified?

The Test, Trace, Protect (TTP) system will be used in order to identify close contacts of learners who have tested positive.

For learners testing positive, TTP will interview them (for those age under 16, this will be with a parent/carer) to establish their close friendship group, the locations they have visited, including social settings, sports and after school clubs and transport during their infectious period and who else they may have been in contact with. TTP may also need to contact the school for some contact details.

9. What are the requirements for the wearing of face coverings?

Welsh Government advice is that:-

- Face coverings should be worn by all staff and visitors (unless exempt) in all in all schools when moving around indoor communal areas outside of the classroom, such as corridors, where physical distance cannot be maintained.
- Face coverings should be worn by all secondary aged learners (unless exempt) when moving around indoor communal areas outside of the classroom, such as corridors, where physical distance cannot be maintained.

Face coverings must continue to be worn by secondary school learners when travelling on dedicated school transport and must be worn by learners 11 years of age and above when using public transport.

10. Is there a requirement for learners in Years 7-13 to undertake regular lateral flow tests (LFTs)?

There is a strong expectation that staff in primary schools and staff and learners in **secondary schools** and colleges **not showing symptoms** should continue take regular rapid lateral flow tests so that staff and learners who are unknowingly carrying the virus can be identified at the earliest opportunity. The required frequency for lateral flow testing is now **twice a week**. These tests should be taken on a **Monday and Thursday** morning prior to attending school. Results should be reported online.

LFTs should be undertaken first thing in the morning whilst at home and ideally prior to having anything or eat or drink.



Anyone who has had a positive coronavirus test result more than 90 days ago is also encouraged to participate in the abovementioned regular lateral flow testing.

Anyone with a positive lateral flow test result should self-isolate for 5 days. (Day 1 is the day immediately following a positive test or symptoms starting). They will no longer be advised to have a follow-up PCR test to confirm the result, unless they are in a clinically vulnerable group. (Note: Anyone with symptoms should have a PCR test NOT a lateral flow test).

All lateral flow test results should be uploaded to www.gov.uk/report-covid19-result.

Individuals can leave isolation after 5 days (i.e. on day 6 of the isolation period). On day 5 of isolation, they should take a lateral flow test and another on day 6. If both results are negative, it is likely they are not infectious and they can end isolation and return to school if they are feeling well and providing that they don't have a high temperature.

However, if either of the tests taken on day 5 or 6 are positive, they should remain in isolation and take another test the following day – they should continue to isolate and not return to school until they have had two consecutive negative lateral flow tests (24 hours apart) or day 10 – whichever is sooner. Individuals do not need a negative lateral flow test on day 10 to leave self-isolation, however if they still have a high temperature, they should continue to self-isolate until their temperature has returned to normal.

NOTE – From the 22nd of December, Welsh Government's position on self-isolation for **contacts** of positive COVID-19 cases changed. All over 18s who are fully vaccinated (having received two full doses of an approved vaccine or one dose of the Janssen vaccine) and learners aged **5 to 17** will be asked to take lateral flow tests every day for 7 days (or until 10 days since the last contact with the person who tested positive for COVID-19 if this is earlier) if they are contacts of someone who has tested positive for COVID-19.

A contact who meets the criteria above does not need to self-isolate unless they have a positive lateral flow test (LFT) themselves or develop symptoms. Symptomatic individuals should book a PCR test as soon as possible.

Unvaccinated adult contacts (aged 18+) must self-isolate for 10 days and take lateral flow tests on day 2 and day 8 (the 10 day isolation period applies regardless of the outcome of these tests).

Further information regarding lateral flow testing is available via:
<https://gov.wales/lateral-flow-testing-people-without-symptoms>



11. How is school pick up and drop off managed?

Parents/carers dropping off/collecting children should maintain distance from other families wherever possible and must leave the school site immediately and not congregate.

ILLNESSES AND POSITIVE TESTS FOR COVID-19

12. What happens if there is a confirmed case of coronavirus (COVID-19) in my child's school or childcare setting?

Where a child, young person or staff member tests **positive**, Test, Trace and Protect (TTP) will lead on identifying the close contacts of the member of staff/learner who has tested positive, supported by discussions with school with any further information the school may have available.

From the 22nd of December, Welsh Government's position on self-isolation for contacts of positive COVID-19 cases changed. All over 18s who are fully vaccinated (having received two full doses of an approved vaccine or one dose of the Janssen vaccine) and learners aged 5 to 17 will be asked to take lateral flow tests every day for 7 days (or until 10 days since the last contact with the person who tested positive for COVID-19 if this is earlier) if they are contacts of someone who has tested positive for COVID-19.

A contact who meets the criteria above does not need to self-isolate unless they have a positive lateral flow test (LFT) themselves or develop symptoms. Symptomatic individuals should book a PCR test as soon as possible.

See question 14 (below) for further information.

The majority of learners in the class/setting will not be identified as close contacts. Instead the school may issue an advice letter to update parents/carers and staff on the situation and what they need to do.

For learners who are identified as close contacts of a confirmed case, the school will be advised by TTP to take a '**warn and inform**' approach to update parents/carers and staff on the situation and what they need to do, based on TTP advice. This 'warn and inform' approach will reinforce key messages about the risk to others from COVID-19 and what can be done to minimise this risk, including – lateral flow testing for 7 days; remaining vigilant for new symptoms; having a low threshold for seeking a PCR test even with mild symptoms; and avoiding contact with vulnerable family and friends in the short-term (e.g. elderly relatives, or those who are unvaccinated, or those who are higher risk of severe COVID-19 infection).



There may be certain circumstances however where fully vaccinated and under 18s contacts may still be asked to self-isolate by the Test, Trace, Protect service but this decision will only be taken where it is necessary to protect public health.

Further details on self-isolation are available via: <https://gov.wales/self-isolation>

13. If someone has been identified as a close contact can they attend school?

From the 22nd of December, Welsh Government's position on self-isolation for contacts of positive COVID-19 cases changed:-

Fully vaccinated adults (18+)

All over 18s who are fully vaccinated (having received two full doses of an approved vaccine or one dose of the Janssen vaccine) will be asked to take lateral flow tests every day for 7 days (or until 10 days since the last contact with the person who tested positive for COVID-19 if this is earlier) if they are contacts of someone who has tested positive for COVID-19.

A contact who meets the criteria above does not need to self-isolate unless they have a positive lateral flow test (LFT) themselves or develop symptoms. Symptomatic individuals should book a PCR test as soon as possible.

Learners aged 5 to 17

All learners aged 5 to 17 will be asked to take lateral flow tests every day for 7 days (or until 10 days since the last contact with the person who tested positive for COVID-19 if this is earlier) if they are contacts of someone who has tested positive for COVID-19.

A contact who meets the criteria above does not need to self-isolate unless they have a positive lateral flow test (LFT) themselves or develop symptoms. Symptomatic individuals should book a PCR test as soon as possible.

Unvaccinated adults (18+)

Where a learner or staff member is aged 18 and above and is **not** fully vaccinated and is a contact of someone who has tested positive for COVID-19, the contact themselves will be required to self-isolate for a full 10-day period and be asked to take a lateral flow test on day 2 and day 8. The unvaccinated adult contact must continue to self-isolate for a full 10-day period regardless of the outcome of any negative test results they themselves may receive.

Children under 5 years of age

Where **children under 5** have been identified as a close contact (household or otherwise), Welsh Government no longer routinely recommend any COVID-19 tests unless directed to do so by a doctor, or if parents believe a test is absolutely necessary and in the best interests of the child. If a child under 5 develops symptoms they should **not** attend school or childcare. They should only return to school or childcare when their



symptoms have resolved or when they are well enough to do so. There is no set isolation period for children under 5 and as such a 'common sense' approach is required of schools and parents.

PCR tests are no longer routinely recommended for children under 5 **with** symptoms, unless directed to do so by a doctor or if it is deemed absolutely necessary and in the best interests of the child. Children under 5 often find the testing process invasive and distressing and this can make getting a sample very difficult and distressing for parents and carers. Additionally, children under 5 do not spread COVID in the same way as an adult or in the same way that people consider young children to spread cold and flu. Young children have small bodies, small lungs and small breath capacity which means even if they are infected with the virus they cannot spread it to others in the same way as an older young person or adult would.

In summary - if a child is under 5 and identified as a close contact, they do not need to isolate or test, hence they can continue to attend school providing that they do not have symptoms of COVID-19.

Child has previously had COVID-19 themselves and another household member later tests positive for COVID-19

If a learner who is a household contact has tested positive for COVID-19 within 90 days prior to their household contact testing positive, they are strongly advised to take a lateral flow test (LFT). If the LFT result is negative, they can stop isolating. If the test result is positive they should isolate for 5 days. On day 5 of isolation, they should take a lateral flow test and another test 24 hours later. If both results are negative, it is likely they are not infectious and they can end isolation and return to school if they are feeling well. However, if either of the tests taken on day 5 or 6 are positive, they should remain in isolation and not return to school until they have had two consecutive negative lateral flow tests (24 hours apart) or day 10 – whichever is sooner.

Child who has tested positive previously for COVID-19 exhibits symptoms again

If a child has tested positive within the last 90 days but **new symptoms** are developed by the child/staff member, they should isolate and take a PCR test, as these could be symptoms of a new infection.

If a child or member of staff tests positive for COVID-19 on a LFT or a PCR test, or has any of the COVID-19 symptoms they should self-isolate and not attend the school.



14. When should I not send my child to school? For example, if they have a fever?

All individuals should stay at home and those aged 5 and above should get a PCR test if:

- they have any of the three symptoms of COVID-19 (new continuous cough, fever or high temperature, loss of, or change in, sense of smell or taste);
- they have a household member who has symptoms or has tested positive for COVID-19.

If individuals receive a positive COVID-19 result, they need to self-isolate for a 5-day period and any contacts need to test as outlined in question 14 above.

Anyone with a positive lateral flow test result should self-isolate for 5 days. (Day 1 is the day immediately following a positive test or symptoms starting). They will no longer be advised to have a follow-up PCR test to confirm the result, unless they are in a clinically vulnerable group. (Note: Anyone with symptoms should have a PCR test NOT a lateral flow test).

All lateral flow test results should be uploaded to www.gov.uk/report-covid19-result.

Individuals can leave isolation after 5 days (i.e. on day 6 of the isolation period). On day 5 of isolation, they should take a lateral flow test and another on day 6. If both results are negative, it is likely they are not infectious and they can end isolation and return to school if they are feeling well and providing that they don't have a high temperature.

However, if either of the tests taken on day 5 or 6 are positive, they should remain in isolation and take another test the following day – they should continue to isolate and not return to school until they have had two consecutive negative lateral flow tests (24 hours apart) or day 10 – whichever is sooner. Individuals do not need a negative lateral flow test on day 10 to leave self-isolation, however if they still have a high temperature, they should continue to self-isolate until their temperature has returned to normal.

Clearly, children with diarrhoea and/or vomiting should not attend their school/setting until they are symptom-free for 48 hours, even if their COVID-19 test result is negative

CATERING

15. Are breakfast clubs operating?

Breakfast clubs have been operating as normal from the start of term in September 2021. If any change to the local or national risk levels require a change in the numbers which can be accommodated, this will be communicated at the earliest opportunity.



16. What are the arrangements for lunch time?

Kitchens are fully open and food is available to all pupils who want it, including those eligible for free school meals.

17. Will BACS payments be made to pupils who are self-isolating?

BACS payments will only be made for eligible learners who are self-isolating due to COVID-19. School registers are used to identify eligible pupils who are required to 'self-isolate' and a Free School Meal support payment of £3.90 per day will be paid into bank accounts via BACS.

School Holidays

The Welsh Government has also made available funding at the rate of £19.50 per week (£3.90 per day) per eligible learner to make free school meal provision available during school holidays until Easter 2022. Accordingly, BACS payments will continue to be made throughout school holiday periods **until Easter 2022.**

If you receive a payment to which you are no longer eligible, you will be required to repay it to the Council.

18. Is water available during the day?

All pupils should bring filled water bottles to school that can be refilled during the day. The refilling of water bottles will be managed and supervised by the school to ensure that the safe refilling of water bottles is available to pupils who need/or request it.

TRANSPORT

19. Is school transport operating?

Dedicated school transport services are running for all entitled learners, in line with the latest Welsh Government guidance.

20. My child is not entitled to free school transport, can I pay for a seat?

Applications to purchase a seat will be significantly limited, taking into consideration the need for social distancing on the vehicle between the driver/



passenger assistant and the learners. It is likely that there will be some schools where there are no seats available to be purchased.

Applications opened on Monday 26th July 2021. You will need to apply to purchase a seat by completing an on-line application on the Council's website: www.rctcbc.gov.uk/schoolbusspasses or by contacting Customer Services on 01443 425001.

21. Is my child expected to wear a face covering on school transport?

Secondary age learners travelling on dedicated Rhondda Cynon Taf school transport **must** wear a face covering, but they are not a substitute for good hygiene. Not only will this measure help reduce the risk of spreading COVID-19 but also common colds and flu, which will also be a benefit.

Learners who travel to school or college on **public** transport must wear a three layer face covering as mandated by the Welsh Government.

Learners must not touch the front of their face covering during use or when removing them. They must wash their hands immediately on arrival at school or home, dispose of temporary face coverings in a covered bin or place re-usable face coverings in a plastic bag for washing.

Please note that a refusal to comply with this requirement will result in your child's place on school transport being compromised. Your support in reinforcing this message with your child would be greatly appreciated. If your child has a medical or health condition, impairment or disability that would make it difficult to wear a face covering please advise school staff at the earliest opportunity.

22. What further precautions must my child take when travelling?

We ask that parents or carers help communicate to their children the importance of following good hygiene, as this will play a key role in keeping everyone safe.

This means taking the following precautions:

- **Do not travel** if your child has any of the four identified COVID-19 symptoms (a new continuous cough, a high temperature or loss of taste or smell);
- **Do not travel** if your child is required to self-isolate by Test, Trace, Protect (TTP) or is in quarantine having returned from a country specified by the Foreign Commonwealth Office;
- Wash your hands for at least 20 seconds or sanitise your hands before leaving the house;



- Use the hand sanitiser provided before accessing the vehicle;
- Avoid physical contact with others;
- Windows will be open for ventilation where possible;
- Face away from other people when using school transport;
- Minimise the number of surfaces you touch, and in particular avoid touching surfaces such as handrails and window ledges;
- Do not touch your face;
- Do not eat or drink whilst using transport;
- Wash your hands for at least 20 seconds or sanitise your hands before leaving school.

Please note that a refusal to comply with health and safety requirements, good hygiene and where possible social distancing could jeopardise your child's place on school transport. Your support in reinforcing this message with your child would be greatly appreciated.

23. How will you ensure that transport services are not overcrowded?

Only named passengers that have prior approval to travel, or those with secondary school bus passes for the route, are allowed to use transport. Drivers have lists of those primary school learners that will be allocated to their vehicle each day. No pass, no travel will be strictly enforced on secondary school vehicles, and those not eligible to travel will be turned away from the vehicle.

EDUCATIONAL VISITS AND SPORTING ACTIVITIES

24. Will off-site educational visits be taking place?

Schools wishing to undertake any type of educational visit will continue to undertake the usual risk assessment process. This risk assessment will include arrangements for what will happen if a member of the group (a learner or staff member) develops COVID-19 symptoms during the visit.

25. Can inter school sports fixtures take place?

Both indoor and outdoor regulated gatherings can now take place. This includes team sports fixtures.



Schools organising sports fixtures are to ensure these arrangements are addressed in the relevant risk assessments and that all reasonable measures to minimise the risk of exposure to COVID-19 are taken.

26. Can practical PE lessons take place?

Schools have flexibility to decide how physical education, sport and physical activity will be provided, working within the measures in place in the school. Outdoor activity should be prioritised wherever possible.

EXAMINATIONS

27. What are the arrangements for examinations in 2022?

The January series ran as scheduled to provide learners who have been preparing the opportunity to take their exams.

For learners who were ill, self-isolating or otherwise felt unable to take their scheduled exams in January, they will have the opportunity to take these exams in the summer.

The assessment requirements for the examinations in 2022 have been adapted to take into account the disruption caused by the pandemic during 2020/2021.

During the spring and summer terms there will be communication from the WJEC, Qualifications Wales and Welsh Government to provide learners with further information about what to expect from the 2022 exam process.

The latest information is available via:

<https://www.wjec.co.uk/home/2022-everything-you-need-to-know/>

<https://qualificationswales.org/english/assessment-arrangements-20212022/>

Qualifications Wales has also developed learner focussed [FAQs](#) which provide further information.

28. What if my child is identified as a contact but has an exam?

If a learner is aged 5-17 or 18 and over and fully vaccinated, and has been identified as a contact to someone who has tested positive for coronavirus, they should take lateral flow tests (LFTs) for 7 days. If the LFT result is positive they should self-isolate as set out in the national guidance.



Anyone who develops symptoms should book a PCR test as soon as possible.

In either instance, if you think this may impact on the ability to sit an exam please contact your child's school or college to make the necessary arrangements.