

Covid-19 testing advised for primary school-aged children in Essex

Parents and carers are being advised to regularly test primary school-aged children to manage rapidly increasing Covid-19 rates and avoid time out of school.

Covid-19 infection rates in primary school-age children in Essex have increased considerably over the past few weeks. Some primary schools are already seeing significant numbers of pupils infected.

As a result, Essex County Council is advising parents of primary school age children to test them twice a week.

While regular household testing has always been encouraged, twice-weekly rapid lateral flow tests for children over two years old is now being recommended.

While the likelihood of serious illness in children is extremely low, after 18 months of serious disruption the DfE and ECC are committed to ensuring that all children and young people in Essex have every opportunity to catch up.

Letters have been sent to parents and carers across the county with the new advice.

Although not compulsory, Dr Mike Gogarty, Essex County Council's Director of Public Health, is encouraging regular testing for this age group providing it does not cause distress for children.

Dr Gogarty said: "We cannot underestimate the rapidly increasing rate of Covid-19 infections we are seeing in Essex primary schools at present and what this will inevitably mean for schools and pupils over the coming weeks.

"The education of children and young people is a top priority this academic year, and so we are asking parents and carers to take action now and help us to manage this so that pupils do not miss out on the important benefits of being in the classroom.

"We appreciate that the changes in Covid-19 guidance can cause anxiety for some, but it is vital that we prevent the spread of the virus within the wider community, especially over the winter months."

Parents and carers can also help to limit an increase in infections by;

- testing primary school-aged children twice a week
- looking out for Covid-19 symptoms in their child (high temperature, new continuous cough, loss of sense of smell or taste), and;
- encouraging hand hygiene with their child.

Rapid lateral flow test kits ensure that as much asymptomatic infection as possible is picked up and will help schools to continue to operate at full capacity.

Test kits can be collected from pharmacies using [one of the new collect codes](#) which can be downloaded. They can also be collected from Essex Library or [ordered online](#).

If a child tests positive, they will need have a PCR test and isolate for 10 days. If the PCR is negative, they can return to school if they are well enough.

ENDS