

FAO all parents/carers of school children in  
NHS Lothian area

Date 10 September 2021  
Your Ref  
Our Ref

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Dear Parents/Carers,

We appreciate there have been a number of changes in how cases of COVID-19 in schools are being managed since the start of term and that this has caused some confusion and anxiety. We hope this letter helps explain these changes.

### Rationale behind the changes

Children and young people have a very low risk of health harm from COVID-19, and children and young people with asymptomatic infection (that is without symptoms) are at a relatively low risk of transmitting COVID-19 to adults. Vaccine uptake is very high, particularly among individuals who are at greater risk of harm from COVID-19, and the vaccines are highly effective at preventing severe disease. This has led to the recent changes in policy for self-isolation and contact tracing for close contacts aged under 18 and means that the blanket isolation of whole school classes will no longer be routine. Far fewer children and young people are likely to be asked to self-isolate, and when they do, it will be for a shorter period of time while they await their PCR result.

### Cases of COVID-19

The advice for people with symptoms of Covid is unchanged. **If your child has symptoms of COVID-19 or tests positive, they must self-isolate** in line with advice given on [NHS Inform](https://www.nhs.uk/healthcareprofessionals/inform).

### Contacts under 18 years

For young people aged under 18 years, the focus of contact tracing now is to identify those who are at the highest risk of being exposed to infection. The Test and Protect process will identify those who have had **close or prolonged contact with the person who is positive such as living in the same household, sleepover or physical relationship type contact with the case**. These high risk close contacts will be asked to isolate and take a PCR test. If the PCR result is negative and they remain without symptoms, then they can end self-isolation. If the PCR test is positive, they must self-isolate as a case as above. If a high risk contact is aged under 5 years, then they will not need to self-isolate so long as they have no symptoms - PCR testing is not required, but still encouraged.

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Chair Professor John Connaghan CBE  
Chief Executive Calum Campbell  
*Lothian NHS Board is the common  
name of Lothian Health Board*

Other children and young people who meet the definition of a contact are considered **low risk** e.g. those who had contact in classrooms, dining rooms, common entry and exit points, general playground contacts, friendship groups and sharing transport to school. These contacts will **not** be directly contact traced by Test and Protect. When cases arise, parents and carers will be alerted via the 'warn and inform' letter so that they can be vigilant and look out for symptoms and signs of COVID-19 in their children.

### **Test and Protect processes**

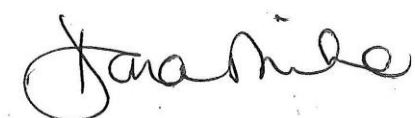
Much of the Test and Protect process is now automated. Parents should not always expect to receive a phone call from Test and Protect staff because much of the contact tracing is carried out electronically. It is therefore important to follow instructions on electronic communications (text and email) carefully and complete all contact information as requested by Test and Protect to help with that process. More information on Test and Protect can be found [here](#), including how to tell that a communication you receive is genuinely from Test and Protect and not a scam.

NHS Lothian continues to work closely with Education colleagues to monitor cases of COVID-19 and support public health measures to reduce the spread of infection in schools. It is important that parents and pupils continue to practice good hand hygiene, comply with mask wearing and other COVID-19 policies. It is also important for secondary pupils to take part in regular LFT testing and to take up the offer of COVID-19 vaccination if they are eligible.

I hope that this provides some background and clarification for the recent changes in approach to COVID-19 contact tracing in young people. If you would like any further information, please see [Scottish Government information sheet](#) for more detail.

Yours faithfully

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Dona Milne', written in a cursive style.

Dona Milne  
Director of Public Health and Health Policy