

15 January 2021

Dear parent/carer,

In light of a changing national picture and a further national lockdown I wanted to write again to you to thank you for your continued support and provide further information on the position in schools across Coventry.

The new variant of coronavirus is now said to be responsible for over two thirds of new infections in Coventry and the West Midlands. Analysis via Public Health England shows that 70% of new infections in the city are the new variant, which the Government has said is far more transmissible than the original strain.

This is contributing to Coventry's increased rate of 535 people with the virus for every 100,000 of the population, which is in the highest range since mass testing started.

This week, Councillor George Duggins, Leader of Coventry City Council, said people in the city must take notice of the rapid rise in new variant infections and take action to help slow the spread.

This is because as a city we want to ensure we can reduce transmission, avoid putting significant strain on our hospitals, and save lives.

In order to support this position, we are asking you to please keep your children at home where you are able to do so during this lockdown. This week we have had over 12 times the number of children and young people in schools across the city when compared with the first lockdown (April 2020). Although, this is a great reflection of your confidence in how our schools have safely managed the virus since reopening, we are concerned that such high numbers attending schools during a national lockdown will not support reductions in the infection rate.

We recognise that it is essential that some children of critical key workers require a school place, but are also pleased that the national guidance was updated to recognise that even where you meet critical key worker criteria you should still keep children at home if you are able to. Therefore, the council is supporting schools by recommending some local criteria they can apply to the key worker guidance, where they are struggling to accommodate the requests for places safely. For critical key worker pupils, we have suggested that schools prioritise places in the following order:

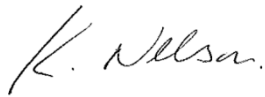
- Both parents or single parent household are critical key workers,
- 1 parent critical key worker and the other parent is not working from home,
- 1 parent critical key worker where the other parent is working from home.

I understand that this is a challenging time, particularly where you are working and have children at home. Schools across the city, however, are providing excellent remote learning provision so if you can keep your children at home and support them to access this please do so.

We continue to take every measure to make sure our schools are as safe as possible, and I would like to thank you for your continued support in helping our city reduce COVID-19.

If you would like any more help and advice around COVID-19, please go to <https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus>

Yours sincerely,



Kirston Nelson
Director of Education & Skills



Liz Gaulton
Director of Public Health and Wellbeing