

County Hall
Topsham Road
Exeter
EX2 4QD

21st September 2020

Dear Parent/Carer,

We've had a good start to the academic year in Devon, with more than 90% of pupils back in school, which is excellent.

There's always a rise in the number of bugs and illness at the start of term, and this year for obvious reasons, there has been a heightened awareness of when our children feel unwell, though in most cases this will not be COVID-19.

However, COVID-19 has not gone away so you can't rule it out, especially as children and young people experience much milder symptoms of the virus than adults.

It's extremely important that anyone with COVID-19 symptoms stays at home and gets tested to avoid the risk of spreading the virus to others, including the more vulnerable in our communities.

That means if your child has any of the symptoms of COVID-19, no matter how mild, you must keep them off school, get them tested and self-isolate your whole household whilst you wait for a test result. Nobody else in your household should get tested, unless they also develop COVID-19 symptoms or are asked to by a health professional.

The symptoms of COVID-19 are:

- **high temperature (37.8°C or above)** – feeling hot to touch on your chest or back (you do not need to measure your temperature)
- **new, continuous cough** – coughing a lot for more than an hour, or 3 or more coughing episodes in 24 hours (if you usually have a cough, it may be worse than usual)
- **loss or change to your sense of smell or taste** – you cannot smell or taste anything, or things smell or taste different from normal

It is clear there are some real issues with public access to testing via the NHS Test and Trace system across Devon, and this is a national issue. I understand how frustrating this can be, particularly when you're being asked to keep your children off school until they can get tested. However, it is crucial that we continue to follow national guidance in order to keep our schools open and our children and communities safe.

If your child has any of the symptoms of COVID-19, no matter how mild, please don't send them in to school. Keep them at home and book a test as soon as you can either via the [government website](#) or by calling 119. If you can't get a test, or the location or time are not convenient, keep trying as availability is updated throughout the day. Please do not go to your GP or A&E department to try to book a test.

If you are unable to get your child tested, they can only return to school after they have self-isolated for 10 days and so long as they feel well and haven't had a temperature for at least 48 hours. The rest of your household can stop self-isolating after 14 days. This will help keep your child's school and community safe.

Despite the challenges with the national system, we are doing all we can locally to support parents and carers in Devon to access tests. If you are unable to book a slot via the national system, you can email d-ccq.cornwalldevon.urgenttesting@nhs.net making it clear the test is for a child attending a Devon school.

Please also find attached some useful resources to help you identify the symptoms of COVID-19 compared to a cold or seasonal flu, along with guidance on what to do if someone in your household develops symptoms of COVID-19.

Yours sincerely



Dr Virginia Pearson
Chief Officer for Communities, Public Health, Environment and Prosperity
Director of Public Health Devon