

## **Flintshire County Council statement on schools**

Flintshire County Council, working with partner organisations, is taking action to prevent the spread of COVID-19 among young people in the county, as transmission of the virus is still increasing. This is why local “lockdown” restrictions have been introduced in four North Wales’ counties, including Flintshire.

If any pupil tests positive there is a strong probability, particularly in secondary schools, that the entire school year will be asked to self-isolate for two weeks. The extent of the group asked to self-isolate will depend on the individual school’s organisational plans, the building layout and to what extent pupils have been able to be kept separate during the school day, and staff availability.

The Council works closely with Public Health Wales to review the number of potential contacts of the pupil who has tested positive to decide who needs to self-isolate. Sometimes, information about positive test outcomes can be received late in the evening or over a weekend, so, in the first instance, it is sensible to take a cautious approach and ask the entire cohort to self-isolate to ensure pupil safety. There is then the opportunity to review the situation and the movements of the pupil who has tested positive to see if it is possible to reduce the numbers of pupils having to self-isolate. There has to be certainty that there has not been the opportunity for cross-contamination before relaxing any advice.

The minimisation of the transmission of the virus and the safety of the community has to take priority. We know that this is the safest way to approach this virus which is so easily transmitted. Self- isolating only a small number of pupils could exacerbate the spread further.

Flintshire County Council’s Chief Officer for Education and Youth, Claire Homard, said:

“Schools have full risk assessments in place and are taking stringent precautions to protect both staff and students. They also have plans ready to switch pupils who cannot attend school onto their digital learning platforms to ensure continuity of education.

“It is impossible for schools to monitor what students do outside of school time. It is therefore important for parents and carers to know where their children are and what they are doing. They should be no mixing with friends who attend different schools, for example. We ask for the support of parents and carers in this to reduce the spread of the virus and the impact on schools.”

Schools remain open and the Council is working closely with the schools affected, Public Health Wales and NHS Wales Test, Trace and Protect to ensure appropriate measures are in place.

Parents and carers are being asked to remain alert for the main symptoms of coronavirus:

- A new or continuous cough
- A high temperature
- A loss of or change to sense of smell or taste

Those advised to self-isolate should book a coronavirus test if they develop any of these symptoms, even if they are mild. A test can be booked by phoning 119 or online: <https://www.nhs.uk/ask-for-a-coronavirus-test>

Advice requires those self-isolating to stay at home, not to go outdoors to exercise, to visit shops, family or friends, or to other public spaces.

Further formation on Test, Trace, Protect can be found here <https://gov.wales/test-trace-protect-coronavirus>