

Dear parents and carers

7<sup>th</sup> June 2021

I hope you all had a relaxing half term holiday. Please see an important message sent to all schools on Wirral from Public Health England.

Thank you for your continued support.

Rebecca Mahony

#### MESSAGE FROM PUBLIC HEALTH ENGLAND

During the last week, many areas across the country have seen an increase in COVID-19 cases and Wirral is no different. In the last week, there have been more than 100 confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Wirral. Our 7-day case rate has risen to 30.9 per 100,000 and (again as predicted), we are also seeing more new cases of the Delta variant (previously called 'Indian variant') than any other variants of the virus. There is now clear community transmission of this variant, but there is currently no reason to believe the vaccines are any less effective against it. Vaccine effectiveness against this variant is something that's being monitored closely, but the fact we are seeing more cases in younger people who have not yet had the vaccine is indicating that the vaccine is protecting older age groups.

In terms of cases in educational settings, most areas within Cheshire and Merseyside have now seen a few outbreaks in schools, with a couple of areas having experienced significant outbreaks in primary schools prior to the half term break. For Wirral, whilst our cases per school remain very low at present, we have seen a few small outbreaks.

#### Birkenhead High School Academy

Principal: Mrs Rebecca Mahony BA Hons NPQH  
86 Devonshire Place, Prenton, Merseyside CH43 1TY  
Website: [www.birkenheadhigh.gdst.net](http://www.birkenheadhigh.gdst.net)

#### GDST Academy Trust is a Limited Company

Registered in England No. 6000347  
Registered Office. 10 Bressenden Place,  
London SW1E 5DH

Senior School Tel: 0151 652 5777 Fax: 0151 670 0639  
Junior School Tel: 0151 652 1740 Fax: 0151 670 0639

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**FOR SECONDARY SCHOOLS:**

Can all parents and carers please ensure that their children continue to take a symptom-free LFD test and if positive, isolate immediately (ie do NOT come into school), inform the school and book a PCR test.

**FOR PRIMARY SCHOOLS AND EARLY YEARS:**

While younger children are not routinely tested, testing is available should parents wish to take it up. Parents can also test themselves as an indicator of whether there is a likelihood of COVID being transmitted among the family. If anyone tests positive, the household should isolate immediately, inform the school/early years setting and book a PCR test.

**FOR ALL EDUCATIONAL SETTINGS, PLEASE ALSO NOTE THE FOLLOWING:**

With the warmer weather and increased pollen levels, it's important for people to understand the difference between the symptoms of hay fever and COVID-19.

While the symptoms of coronavirus and hay fever can overlap, people with hay fever don't experience a high temperature and most won't feel unwell. But hay fever can play tricks on your sense of smell and give you a sore throat. If you suffer with hay fever, make sure you are regularly tested for COVID-19 to be on the safe side.

PHE has confirmed that ALL COVID cases in the North West be considered as likely Indian variant unless/until proven otherwise. Whilst otherwise being managed in exactly the same way as any other variant, the recommendation at this stage (and until further notice), is that all school contacts of confirmed cases of COVID will need to be offered a PCR, whether they have symptoms or not. This is for the purpose of active case-finding. As it is not feasible (or proportionate!) to arrange for this to happen via our educational settings, we are asking that you please inform any close contacts of cases that they need to request a home-testing kit via the self-booking system. Staff, students and parents should be directed to [www.gov.uk/get-coronavirus-test](https://www.gov.uk/get-coronavirus-test) to book this test. They will be asked to identify whether they have COVID symptoms. If they have no symptoms, they should select 'No' for this answer and proceed through the questions until they get to the question: Why are you asking for a test? They should select the box that says - I've been told to get a test by my local council, health protection team or healthcare professional .... And then the option that states: My local council or health protection team has asked me to get a test, even though I do not have symptoms. They can then proceed to book the test.

Wirral Public Health

Rebecca Mahony



Principal