

18th May 2021

Dear Parent/Carer

**An important message from Vicky Head, Director of Public Health**

A small number of cases of the COVID-19 variant known as VOC-21APR-02 or B1.617.2 (first identified in India) have been identified in Central Bedfordshire. These cases are not related to travel and include cases in school-aged children.

We are working closely with Public Health England to investigate the cases and will undertake additional testing where this is appropriate.

There is concern that this variant may transmit more easily than the standard strain that had been circulating locally. In nearby Bedford, cases of this variant are increasing, and there has been a rapid rise in cases overall, particularly amongst school aged children.

The emergence of this new strain locally and the speed with which it has spread in Bedford, is a reminder that we must all continue to do what we can to control the spread of the virus.

To limit the spread in school settings, there are **three key things** that you can do to help:

**1. Continue to be vigilant for symptoms of Covid-19**

Please be vigilant for symptoms of COVID-19 and keep your child at home if unwell. If this happens, then please self-isolate and book a PCR test at <https://www.gov.uk/get-coronavirus-test> or by calling 119.

**2. Continue to participate in regular LFD testing**

Everyone in Central Bedfordshire is encouraged to take up the offer of twice weekly testing. We have [test centres](#) across Central Bedfordshire for people to get tested, which can provide results usually within 30 minutes. You can collect tests from [test centres](#), from [local pharmacies](#) or order tests for home delivery at: <https://www.gov.uk/order-coronavirus-rapid-lateral-flow-tests>

**3. If you (as a parent) are eligible for vaccination, book this promptly**

You can book your vaccination at: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/coronavirus-vaccination/book-coronavirus-vaccination/>

We will continue to work with our education settings to ensure they remain as safe as possible for our children and young people.

Whilst we are concerned about this new variant, there is little evidence at present to suggest it causes more severe illness or makes the vaccines less effective.

Thank you for your ongoing support



**Vicky Head**

Director of Public Health

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