

12th October 2021

Dear parents/carers

Please find below a letter from the Education Secretary Nadhim Zahawi and Health Secretary Sajid Javid.

*We know that children and young people have been hugely affected by the pandemic, both in terms of their education and their ability to socialise and participate in activities that benefit them outside of formal education.*

*We want to thank you as parents and guardians of secondary school and college students for your support over the last eighteen months. We know this time has been difficult for many of you, as well as for the young people you care for.*

*As students return to the classroom, we would ask for your continued support to make sure your children are able to stay in face-to-face learning, by encouraging them to:*

- *test themselves for COVID-19 twice a week, and more frequently if they are specifically asked to do so. This way, we can find individuals who have the virus but are not showing symptoms, and stop them from passing it on to others.*
- *come forward for the COVID-19 vaccine. This is one of the best things young people can do to protect themselves and those around them.*

*We know that students have missed a lot of time in school and college since the pandemic started, and that there is no substitute for face-to-face learning. Keeping students in the classroom in the coming months is therefore a Government priority, both for their immediate and longer-term wellbeing.*

*We know that some of you will be concerned about the health risks to the young people you care for. We want to reassure you that the evidence shows that young people remain at very low risk of serious illness from COVID-19.*

*However, we need to continue to reduce the spread of COVID-19. Young people who get ill will need to miss school or college, and may spread it to others. That is why we are encouraging you all to support your children to get vaccinated and to continue to test regularly. This will help to detect cases early, reduce spread, and keep students in education.*

## **Vaccination**

*Vaccines are our best defence against COVID-19. They help protect young people, and benefit those around them. Vaccination makes people less likely to catch the virus and less likely to pass it on.*

*The COVID-19 vaccination programme for children aged 12-15 years has now started. Thousands of young people across the country have already taken the opportunity to receive their vaccine. If your child is 12-15 years old, a consent form and information leaflet from the [NHS](#) will be sent home allowing you to provide consent for your child to receive their vaccination at school*

*We remind you that 16- and 17-year-olds can book their vaccination through the [National Booking Service](#) or find a convenient [walk-in site](#). Please do help your 16 and 17-year-olds to book a vaccination for yourself if you have not done so already, or if you have missed a second dose.*

## **Testing**

*We ask that you support and encourage your children to test twice a week at home, every week, with Lateral Flow Device (LFD) tests. This will help us reduce the transmission of COVID-19 among our children. Please report and upload test results [online](#), even if they are negative or void, as this allows us to understand the virus and take additional action when needed.*

*In addition to regular twice weekly testing:*

- *Children who receive a positive LFD result should isolate and book a PCR test to confirm their result.*
- *Children who are identified as a close contact by NHS Test and Trace should take a PCR test and continue to go to school while they wait for their result.*
- *In response to potential outbreaks, your school, college or local health team may advise additional testing. For example, if your child is identified as a close contact, they may be asked to take daily LFDs, while they wait for their PCR result. In this*

scenario, they should continue to attend school as long as their LFD results remain negative.

Additionally, please encourage your child to [follow guidance on wearing face coverings](#) in crowded spaces with people they don't know well, for example on school transport.

We know that many of you will have questions or concerns about this, and we understand that. The NHS website ([www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)) is an excellent source of advice, which we hope will be able to answer many of your questions about testing or vaccination. If not, you can call the 119 service who should be able to help with questions on testing. When you get a vaccination consent form for your child, it will include details of how you can ask further questions of your local teams.

Thank you again for your support.

**Here are some frequently answered questions for parents, from Dr Mary Ramsay, Head of Immunisation at the UK Health Security Agency**

### **Why do young people aged 12 to 15 years need to get the vaccine?**

Coronavirus (COVID-19) infection is typically mild in most young people, but it can be very unpleasant for some and one dose of the vaccine will provide good protection against severe illness and hospitalisation.

Vaccinating 12 to 15 year olds also helps reduce the need for young people to have time off school and reduces the risk of spread of COVID-19 within schools. The vaccine will protect young people from COVID-19 and reduce disruption to education, which is good for their welfare and mental health.

### **Why did the JCVI say young people didn't need the vaccine?**

The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) looked at the direct health benefits of vaccines, and in the case of 12 to 15 year olds, they said that there was only a small advantage for young people in getting a dose of the vaccine. The Chief Medical Officers (CMOs) took into account the extra health benefits from avoiding children missing education and concluded that there were public health grounds to recommend vaccinating 12 to 15 year olds. The UK CMOs' advice sets out their reasoning here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/universal-vaccination-of-children-and-young-people-aged-12-to-15-years-against-covid-19>

***My child has already had COVID-19 - should they still get the vaccine?***

*Yes, they should be vaccinated regardless of whether they have already had a COVID-19 infection because:*

- *research has not yet shown how long people who have had COVID-19 are protected from getting it again after they recover*
- *vaccination helps to boost your protection, even if you've already had COVID-19*

***Has the vaccine been given to 12 to 15 year olds in other countries?***

*Trials in thousands of children have shown that the vaccine works very well in this age group. The vaccine has since been given to millions of 12 to 15 year olds in a number of countries, including 8 million in the United States. Data from these countries show that the vaccine has a good safety record.*

***Does the COVID-19 vaccine cause heart problems in young people?***

*Worldwide, there have been very rare cases of inflammation of the heart called myocarditis or pericarditis reported after COVID-19 vaccines. Most of these young people felt better following rest and simple treatments. These cases have been seen mostly in younger males and mainly occurred within a few days of the second dose; it is extremely rare after the first dose of the vaccine.*

***Is the vaccine safe for children with allergies or other medical conditions?***

*There are very few children or young people who cannot receive the vaccine. If in doubt, young people and their parents or carers should check with the school immunisation team or consult their GP or specialist clinician.*

***I have seen fake stories on social media about the vaccine***

You may have come across false or misleading information about the virus or the vaccine. It is important that you get your information from trusted sources such as:

***The children's programme information***

The parents' guide is on the link below with the guidance for schools:

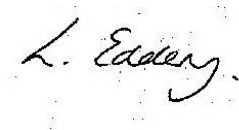
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-vaccination-resources-for-schools>

Here is the leaflet for the children and parents:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-vaccination-resources-for-children-and-young-people>

Further information can be found here: [www.nhs.uk/covid-vaccine-children](http://www.nhs.uk/covid-vaccine-children).

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'L. Eddery'.

Miss Eddery  
Principal