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Dear Parent/Carer

Welcoming you back to school in Aberdeenshire: Make testing part of your routine

We hope you have enjoyed the summer break and we look forward to welcoming children and young people back into our schools and settings.

As outlined by the Scottish Government, the mitigations in place within our schools before the summer holidays will continue – subject to ongoing review – for the first six weeks of term. To that end we ask for your continued support in ensuring your child/children follows the guidance in place prior to the holidays around face coverings and other mitigations your school had in place. There's also another very important ask of children and young people, their families and staff as we prepare for the return to school, and that is to make asymptomatic testing for COVID-19 part of your routine.

As outlined by the Scottish Government, pupils are encouraged to test two days before returning to school and twice weekly as term gets underway. Here are some key points to consider:

- **Please test before returning to school:** All school staff and secondary pupils are strongly encouraged to restart twice-weekly at-home LFD testing in the week prior to return. Ideally, please take your second weekly test either in the morning before you leave for your first day of school or the evening before.
- **Please record your results:** It is really important that you [record your results online](#), whether positive, negative or void. This helps public health experts understand what levels of COVID-19 are, and can inform policy on things like mitigations in schools.
- **Benefits of testing:** Testing can help reduce the risks of COVID-19 outbreaks in schools. This, in turn, can help reduce the likelihood that staff or children and young people will have to self-isolate due to outbreaks.
- **Accessing test kits:** Many schools provided test kits to staff and pupils prior to the summer break, which can be used for these purposes. If any staff or pupils have not received test kits, they can access them in a range of different ways, including ordering online for home

delivery, or collecting kits from your nearest test site or pharmacy. They can also take a test at a local test site, which may be better for those who need assistance when testing. Further information is available at: [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): getting tested in Scotland - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](https://www.gov.scot/topics/health/coronavirus/covid-19/testing).

- **Vaccination:** If your son/daughter is aged 16 or over after 1st August 2021, s/he is eligible for a vaccine and information can be accessed by going online and searching “NHS Inform COVID-19 vaccine”.

I know testing children and young people isn't always easy and I really do appreciate your patience and perseverance. We are all enjoying a much greater sense of flexibility and time with family and friends, but it's important to remember we're not out of the woods yet. We can all do our bit to support these next steps and a big part of that at the moment is encouraging everyone to engage in asymptomatic testing.

So as you look out your school shoes, pack your bag and prepare for those first day photos, please also remember to take a test and also to record the results of that test. We really appreciate everyone taking the time and trouble to support this important next phase.

Following changes to the self-isolation guidance, whole class groups will no longer be asked to self-isolate when one person tests positive. Instead, a targeted approach will be taken whereby those most at risk will be identified. Should your child be the one who tests positive, s/he will still be required to self-isolate for 10 days. If s/he is over the age of five and identified as a close contact, s/he will need to take a PCR test. If this is negative, the period of self-isolation will end with confirmation of the negative result. Children under the age of five identified as close contacts will be encouraged, but not required, to self-isolate. We will continue to work closely with our colleagues in Public Health at NHS Grampian and will provide updates to parents/carers as these are required.

I would also like to take this opportunity to remind everyone of the online mental health services which we shared details of before the summer break.

Kooth for children aged 10 to 18

[Kooth](#) is an online wellbeing community for children aged 10 to 18. It offers one to one sessions with counsellors and emotional wellbeing practitioners. They can help children and young people talk through their problems and anything that is on their mind. The sessions are available via drop-in or booked appointments which helps to reduce waiting times for anyone seeking help.

This service can be accessed by registering at the Kooth website. Support is also available to schools and staff supporting children and young people by emailing aberdeenshire@kooth.com

Togetherall for 16 year olds and over

[Togetherall](#) is available to anyone aged 16 or over. It helps to bridge a gap between youth and adult services with appropriate mental wellbeing support. Trained and accredited professionals are available 24/7 to support the community members and there is a choice of safe therapeutic services, including courses, self-assessments and wellbeing resources to improve your mental health. This means anyone who may be struggling can get support at a time that suits them, from a place of their choice.

The Togetherall community is anonymous but you will need to register to access it. During registration, select 'My area is registered' and enter your postcode. You will then be asked to create a completely anonymous user account.

I hope this finds you and your family well and look forward to continuing our strong partnership with parents and carers as the new term gets underway.

Yours sincerely



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