

13 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 B.1.617.2 (first identified in India) have been identified in Milton Keynes. These cases are not related to travel and have been identified in school aged children.

We are working closely with Public Health England to investigate the cases and as a precautionary measure, will undertake targeted testing where required.

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 Milton Keynes is encouraged to take up the offer of twice weekly testing. People without symptoms can drop in to our rapid test centre at MK Central Library. No appointment is needed and results usually come back in less than an hour. You can also collect 14 free rapid test kits when you visit Central Library or from local pharmacies.

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

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.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'VH', is centered on a light grey rectangular background.

Vicky Head
Director of Public Health
Milton Keynes Council