

Press release – Version 2

Bracknell Forest Schools to move to online learning on Friday 18 December

The majority of schools in Bracknell Forest will provide online learning on Friday, 18 December so they can complete the majority of essential contact tracing ahead of the Christmas bubble system coming into force.

Public Health England has today advised that schools should have six clear days to carry out essential contact tracing after the end of term.

In light of this information, Bracknell Forest Council has agreed that schools can move to online learning on Friday, 18 December*, so that they can complete the majority of essential tracing ahead of the Christmas relaxations, which start on 23 December.

Children will still be able to learn online on Friday, 18 December, however, it means that most pupils will finish their face-to-face learning on Thursday 17, December – a day earlier than most schools had planned.

Bracknell Forest schools will not be carrying out contact tracing from Thursday, 24 December, from that date all contact tracing will be carried out by NHS Test and Trace.

Parents and carers have been advised of the changes today and have also been advised that:

- where a pupil or staff member tests positive for COVID-19, having developed symptoms more than 48 hours since being in school, the school should not be contacted. Parents and carers should follow contact tracing instructions provided by NHS Test and Trace
- for the first six days after teaching ends (up to but not including Thursday 24 December in Bracknell Forest), if a pupil or staff member tests positive for COVID-19, having developed symptoms within 48 hours of being in school, the school is asked to assist in identifying close contacts and advising self-isolation, as the individual may have been infectious whilst in school
- school staff are not asked to remain on-call or conduct any contact tracing more than six days after the final day of teaching. Where a schools last teaching day is on Thursday, 17 December, there should be no pupil contact tracing asks beyond Wednesday, 23 December.

Any child identified as a close contact needs to self-isolate for 14 days. This means that they must not join any Christmas bubble while they are in self-isolation in order to protect their family and friends.

Cllr Gareth Barnard, Executive Member for Children, Young People and Learning, said: “Public Health England has today made it clear that schools need to carry out contact tracing for six days after term finishes in physical school buildings. So that our schools can do the bulk of that work ahead of the Christmas bubble system coming into place, we have agreed that schools can move to online learning on Friday 18 December.

“I know that this is short notice for some parents and carers, but it is only one day of home schooling for most pupils and will enable this vital work to take place and hopefully give a little more certainty before the real festivities begin.

“It’s been a tough year for all our schools, and they are being called upon to take on the extra and sometimes complex task of essential contact tracing as well as making sure they keep everyone as safe as possible while providing high quality and effective education. Schools staff remain committed to reducing the spread and they will be carrying out this extra work during what would usually be the start of their holiday in order to keep their communities safe.”

A number of Bracknell Forest schools have full or partial closures in place currently due to outbreaks and contact tracing. Children with symptoms, who have tested positive or who have been asked to self-isolate should continue to follow the guidance the school has provided.

Unless children are self-isolating, have symptoms, or have tested positive they should continue to attend school as normal until home schooling starts on Friday, 18 December. Schools will advise parents/ carers directly of what online learning will be available on 18 December.

Notes

*In some circumstances it may not be possible for a school to close for face-to-face learning on Friday, 18 December. Parents are advised to check with their child’s school for details.