

## Schools Jan 2021 - Covid 19 Variant

### Introduction:

The SAGE guidance 'Mitigations to Reduce Transmission of the new variant SARS-CoV-2 virus. dated 23rd December 2020 provides us with possible routes to further mitigating the effects of the virus.

This is not current UK.gov guidance but the government will be noting this advice to further reduce the risk of transmission, the document uses the terms Medium and High Confidence as indicators of possible choices.

### Medium Confidence:

1. The virus will spread rapidly to areas away from London and the South East unless stringent controls are applied
2. It is essential to reinforce the hierarchy of control by all known routes i.e.
  - a. Close range
  - b. Airborne
  - c. Via Surfaces**
3. Enhancing mitigating factors e.g.
  - a. 2mtr rule**
  - b. Correct use of face coverings
    - i. Possible further requirement in places not already mandated such as **education**, workplaces, crowded outdoor areas etc
  - c. Enhanced Ventilation**

### High Confidence:

1. Step change in rigour of applying mitigations
  - a. Reduction in social contact
  - b. Effective test and trace
  - c. Robust outbreak identification and control
  - d. Support to ensure isolation and quarantine
  - e. Population vaccination
2. Population level approaches
  - a. Extension of Tier 4
  - b. Change operation of schools**
  - c. Travel restrictions

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- d. National Lockdown
3. Communication
4. A new intense culturally tailored communication strategy to target and include all sectors of society with the message to:
  - a. Reduce indoor contact
  - b. High adherence to testing and isolation
  - c. Consistent use of 'high quality' face coverings whenever indoor close contact is unavoidable
  - d. Ventilation

## **Actions for Schools**

Previously identified personal, procedural, engineering and societal mitigations to reduce transmission of SARS-CoV-2 virus all continue to apply to the new variant, but are likely to require a step change in rigour of application given that the new variant is likely to represent a significantly increased transmission risk

In light of this it is recommended that schools

1. Review the schools risk assessment - with a focus on ensuring engineering, procedural and personal controls are being applied rigorously
  - Review social distancing within classrooms - promotion of segregation at front of classes through clear demarcation to support social distancing between pupil bubbles and staff
  - Review social distancing for staff areas
  - Review enhanced cleansing arrangements for high touch surfaces
  - Review communications, reemphasising good hand and respiratory hygiene
  - Review ventilation arrangements
2. Clinically Extremely Vulnerable Staff - Clinically extremely vulnerable people should not go to the workplace if they live or work in areas where shielding advice is active (Tier 4).

## **References:**

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/948607/s0995-mitigations-to-reduce-transmission-of-the-new-variant.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/948607/s0995-mitigations-to-reduce-transmission-of-the-new-variant.pdf)

[Ventilation and air conditioning during the coronavirus \(COVID-19\) pandemic](#)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-on-shielding-and-protecting-extremely-vulnerable-persons-from-covid-19/guidance-on-shielding-and-protecting-extremely-vulnerable-persons-from-covid-19>

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[HR Guidance for Schools](#)