

London Borough of Havering
Main Road, Romford RM1 3BD

Parent / Carer

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Date: 7th December 2020

Coronavirus (Covid-19)

We hope you and your family are safe and well at this difficult time, and thank you for your continued support to the national response to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Our head teachers and school staff have worked very hard to ensure that children could return to school since September, and it remains vital for all children to be in school to help minimise the longer-term impact of the pandemic on their education, wellbeing and wider development.

However, you will have seen the worrying news that cases of Covid-19 remain high locally, and since the end of the national restrictions on December 2nd, you will be aware that Havering finds itself in Tier 2: High Alert, with a number of restrictions still in place.

It is therefore more important than ever that you do not socialise with anyone you do not live with, or who is not in your support bubble in any indoor setting, whether at home or in a public place.

You must also not socialise in a group of more than 6 people outside, including in a garden or a public space – this is called the ‘rule of 6’.

Whilst we are sure you have welcomed the changes to the social contact restriction for a short time over the festive period, it is essential that you follow the rules and only form an exclusive ‘Christmas bubble’ composed of people from no more than three households. You can only be in one Christmas bubble, you cannot change your Christmas bubble, and you cannot meet someone in a private dwelling who is not part of your household or Christmas bubble.

We know that families could be affected by having Christmas plans cancelled due to an imposed period of self-isolation following exposure to a positive case of Covid-19 in school in the final week of term.

The Council does not have the power to close all schools, or ask them to move to remote learning for the final week of term, and the Department for Education have made it clear that parents/carers should continue to send their children to school right up until the end of term. The Chief Medical Officer also provided detailed advice, setting out that the risk to children of becoming severely ill from Covid-19 is very low.

However, the Local Authority anticipates that attendance in school will be lower than normal in the final week of term due to parents/carers wanting to ‘quarantine’ their family before seeing family members over the festive period that may be more

vulnerable to Covid-19 than others. As always, the decision whether to authorise any absence rests with the Head teacher to consider on a case-by-case basis.

Anyone considering withdrawing their child from school for the final week of term would also need to 'quarantine' in the run up to Christmas to have any confidence that they are Covid-19 free when they meet vulnerable relatives. The available evidence continues to suggest that the majority of transmission is occurring in the home, and the mental health benefits of children and young people meeting wider family during the Christmas period need to be weighed against the possible risk, particularly to vulnerable relatives. Further information about what is permissible in law over the Christmas period is available here.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/making-a-christmas-bubble-with-friends-and-family>

If your child or anyone in your household has symptoms of Covid-19 (a temperature, a new continuous cough or loss of/change to taste or smell), you must not send your child to school, and it is essential that the whole household self-isolates. You must order a test for whoever has symptoms as soon as possible, and to order a test, please call NHS 119 or book online at <https://www.gov.uk/get-coronavirus-test>.

Anyone who tests positive will need to self-isolate for at least 10 days, and the rest of the household for 14 days, in line with the latest stay at home guidance. If the test results are negative, your household can usually leave self-isolation and your child can return to school when they no longer are unwell, assuming they haven't been traced as a close contact of someone who has tested positive, in which case they will still need to wait out the remainder of the 14 day isolation period.

We all need to follow the government's advice to reduce the risk of further increases in Covid-19 infections locally, as a local outbreak may result in further full or partial school closures at short notice.

We assure you that our schools offer a safe environment, and the health and safety of children, their families and staff remains everyone's first priority during this period.

Thank you for your continued co-operation at this time, and we wish you a peaceful Christmas break and New Year.

Kind regards,



Cllr Robert Benham
Deputy Leader of the Council
Cabinet Member for Education,
Children & Families



Mark Ansell
Director of Public Health

