

Parent / Carer

Date: February 2021

Coronavirus (Covid-19) – Re-opening of Schools

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

Our head teachers and school staff have worked very hard to ensure that as many children as possible could remain in school during the current national restrictions, but 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.

Many of you will have heard the Prime Minister setting out the government's position that from 8 March, all children will return to school. The government has confirmed that school attendance will therefore be mandatory again from that date, and pupils of compulsory school age must be in school unless a statutory reason applies.

This means that the usual rules on school attendance will again apply, including the powers to impose sanctions and fixed penalty notices. A small number of pupils will still be unable to attend in line with public health advice because they are self-isolating and have had symptoms or a positive test result themselves, they are a close contact of someone who has Covid-19, or are following clinical advice.

Your actions through the recent period of national restrictions have meant that the number of cases of Covid-19 have dropped locally, but it has never been more important that you continue to do your bit in reducing the risk of transmitting the virus.

Schools are working very hard to ensure they have measures in place to manage any cases in the best possible way to reduce disruption for the whole school. Please adhere to any new processes that your school has put in place, as these have been introduced to ensure the safety of your child, the staff, and the wider community.

Schools may implement staggered starts, or adjust start and finish times to keep groups apart as they arrive and leave school, so please adhere to any new process that has been agreed for drop off and collection. Please also set an example to your children by following the current national restrictions, following social distance rules, and wearing a face covering (mask not visor) at the school gates, unless you have good reason not to.

In secondary schools, it is now recommended that face coverings should be worn by pupils in classrooms or during activities unless social distancing can be maintained. Pupils in secondary schools will also be offered rapid testing from 8 March to support the return to face-to-face education by helping to identify people who are infectious but do not have any Covid-19 symptoms. Once secondary pupils have been tested three times in schools, each test 3 to 5 days apart, they will be provided with home test kits for regular testing from the end of March.

It is expected that twice-weekly testing at home with a rapid test kit will become routine for secondary pupils as well as for staff in both primary and secondary schools. Schools will contact you directly with regard to the initial testing arrangements, which may be in a phased approach for different year groups.

There will also be noticeable differences in the way different schools implement some of the measures based on their individual circumstances. Schools will be thoroughly reviewing their health and safety risk assessments and drawing up plans to address the risks identified. Essential measures will include:

- minimising contact with individuals who are unwell by ensuring that those who have Covid-19 symptoms, or who have someone in their household who does, do not attend school
- clean hands thoroughly and more often than usual
- ensure good respiratory hygiene - the 'catch it, bin it, kill it' approach
- introduce enhanced cleaning, including cleaning frequently touched surfaces often
- minimising contact between individuals and maintain social distancing wherever possible to reduce the risk of transmission
- where necessary and in specific circumstances, wear appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE)
- active engagement with NHS Test and Trace

It is essential that pupils do not come into the school if they have Covid-19 symptoms, or have tested positive in the last 10 days, as per the [Stay at Home Guidance](#). Anyone developing Covid-19 symptoms during the school day will be sent home to self-isolate for at least 10 days, and should arrange to have a test to see if they have Covid-19. Other members of their household (including any siblings) should self-isolate for 10 days from when the symptomatic person first had symptoms.

We are all looking forward to the easing of the current national restrictions, but we must remain careful and follow the government's advice to reduce the risk of further increases in Covid-19 infections locally, as a local outbreak may result in full or partial school closures at short notice. We encourage you to do your bit as the health and safety of children, their families and staff remains everyone's first priority during this period.

To keep up-to-date with the latest information please visit our website - <https://www.havering.gov.uk/covid19> or you can subscribe to our regular resident bulletin, Living in Havering - <https://www.havering.gov.uk/enews>

Thank you for your continued co-operation at this time.

Kind regards,



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



Mark Ansell
Director of Public Health

