



Wednesday 3 March 2021

Dear Parents and Carers

The reopening of schools

I hope that you are well. I am sure that you are looking forward to your child/children returning to school over the next week or so. In the case of our **primary** schools, we will be welcoming pupils back from Monday 8 March. As you will be aware, we are required to offer Lateral Flow Tests to all **secondary** pupils, so the return will be slightly staggered to our secondary schools. Your child's school will have been in touch with specific details.

Much has been made of the return to schools nationally and it is a huge relief and a very welcome step forward in this long battle with the pandemic. We have missed our pupils being in school and I speak for all of my colleagues in saying that we are genuinely excited about welcoming them back. I want to pay tribute to all of you who have worked in close partnership with your child's teachers to create the very best educational provision for our youngsters during this period; I know that it has been a real challenge, especially for those of you working from home as well. I also want to publicly thank all of our staff across the schools for the exceptional effort they have put into remote learning provision for our youngsters. This has been a steep learning curve for our profession nationally, and I am incredibly proud of the work our staff have done. Your messages of recognition and thanks have been so appreciated by those hardworking members of staff; thank you for taking the time to send them.

Even though pupils will be back in school from next week, we are certainly not yet "back to normal". Firstly, as mentioned above, the Government have asked us to offer three lateral flow tests to **secondary** pupils in the first few days of their return, after which they will be provided with tests for you to oversee at home. Please note that we can only send testing kits home if they have had the three tests in school first. There is no requirement or provision for testing **primary** pupils. As parents and carers of school pupils, you are entitled to receive twice-weekly lateral flow tests yourselves. Please note that these **will not be available from your child's school**. If you would like to order tests for yourself and other adults in your household, please visit your nearest home test kit collection point (<https://find-covid-19-rapid-test-sites.maps.test-and-trace.nhs.uk>) or order online at <https://www.gov.uk/order-coronavirus-rapid-lateral-flow-tests>.

Secondly, the Department for Education have recommended that in **secondary** schools, all pupils wear masks in classrooms as well as when moving around the building now. Again, there is no requirement for pupils to wear masks in **primary** schools.

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Thirdly, we have been so grateful for the way in which parents and carers have adapted to new drop off and pick up arrangements at our schools, including the different times and entrances used, as well as all adults wearing face coverings when coming to the schools in the mornings and afternoons. As well as helping to reduce the spread of infection, this is so helpful in maintaining the confidence of school staff and other parents and carers. These measures will remain in place for the foreseeable future.

Fourthly, we remain very hopeful that we are nearing the end of this terrible chapter of COVID. The vaccine roll out seems to be going very well indeed and case numbers, hospitalisations and deaths are falling. That said, please be aware that we will be dealing with any positive cases in school in the same that we have been previously; your child may be asked to isolate for ten days if they have been in direct, close contact with anyone who has tested positive. Let us hope that any such instances are few and far between, should they occur.

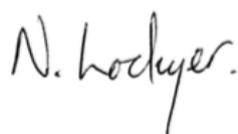
Finally, may I remind you that if your child or anyone within the household develops any of these three COVID-19 symptoms, you **should not** send them into school:

- a high temperature – this means they feel hot to touch on their chest or back (you do not need to measure their temperature)
- a new, continuous cough – this means coughing a lot for more than an hour, or 3 or more coughing episodes in 24 hours (if they usually have a cough, it may be worse than usual)
- a loss or change to their sense of smell or taste – this may mean that they cannot smell or taste anything, or that things smell or taste different to normal.

If your child develops symptoms, you should follow the national guidance and seek a test. They must stay at home for 10 days from when the symptoms began, unless their test result is negative. If your child is awaiting a test result, please do not send them into school. This can contribute to the spread of COVID-19.

We have reviewed our risk assessments and plans to ensure that all pupils and staff are as safe as they can possibly be in our schools. Our school staff continue to work extremely hard on all aspects of provision for your children – both educationally and in terms of keeping them healthy and safe. Thank you for your ongoing support and cooperation in helping us with this.

With best wishes



Neil Lockyer
Chief Executive Officer