

Ealing Council
Perceval House
14-16 Uxbridge Road
London W5 2HL

Coronavirus – Return to school communication overview 26 February 2021

Dear colleagues

Following the government's announcement that schools should open for all pupils from 8th March, we have attached a quick overview of local updates developed alongside the published DfE guidance 22 February [Actions for schools during the coronavirus outbreak - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/guidance/actions-for-schools-during-the-coronavirus-outbreak)

Through our meetings with representative headteachers, we have agreed the importance of schools working together to communicate consistent messages to pupils, parents and staff. The local roll-out of the vaccine is going well and there has been an overwhelmingly positive response to the plans for the return of pupils from 8th March. Specific guidance has been updated on EGfL but please see summary points below.

Risk Assessments

The DfE guidance advises schools to update their risk assessments prior to the wider re-opening of schools from 8th March. We have updated the generic risk assessment to reflect the additional measures that schools can put in place. The risk assessment is available [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) guidance | Ealing Grid for Learning \(egfl.org.uk\)](https://www.egfl.org.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19)

Enhanced Testing in Ealing

You will have seen on the news that a very small number of cases of the South African variant have been identified across the borough. On 25th February, the Council announced additional measures over the next month to help with its surveillance work on new variants and support the drive to reduce infection. Further information is available: [Residents urged to get a test](#)

All residents over 16 are encouraged to get a test and we welcome your support encouraging families to participate in asymptomatic testing and continuing messages around isolation/testing if symptomatic.

For the next month, any pupil or staff who tests positive by LFT at a high school testing site, will also require a PCR to access additional genomic sequencing for variants this month. Home testing LFTs that test positive will continue to require confirmatory PCR. Isolation and contact tracing can still commence with the positive LFT result.

Building the confidence of parents/carers

We know that some parents/carers may be anxious about sending their children back to school. We are producing letters for you to use with parents/carers on communicating positive messages about school return and to help contextualise the government's plan to enhance testing in the borough. These will be available on Monday. The Family Information Service will continue to support your communications with families. Communication is intended to help address anxieties around school attendance and promote vaccine take-up within specific communities. Do please contact the attendance service for additional support required in engaging families over the coming weeks.

Asymptomatic testing

We encourage all schools to support our efforts in engaging as many staff and pupils as possible in asymptomatic testing. We recognise the huge operational implications of testing all pupils in secondary schools, but we are confident that our schools are doing everything possible to support pupils' return to face-to-face learning in school.

Staff testing kits are being sent out to all schools over the coming days and kits for secondary-aged pupils will follow for use at home after the three on-site tests. DfE webinars are now available to support on-site and home testing. The next webinar is scheduled for 5th March.

Council staff working in schools

Council staff deployed to work in schools are expected to resume face to face duties from 8th March (in conjunction with risk assessments) and they have been asked to participate in asymptomatic testing through our local LFT centres. There is currently no allocation of home-testing kits for these workers so if you can support home-testing for frequent and regular staff, this would be most helpful.

Shielding staff

Our [Staffing guidance for 8 March 2021](#) has been updated to reflect the extension of shielding for Clinically Extremely Vulnerable staff until 31 March 2021. Additional people have been added to the CEV list and this has possible impacts for schools. Schools should contact us, if, for any reason, staffing capacity is severely impacted.

Vulnerable pupils

The government has emphasised the importance of schools having robust re-engagement plans for their most disadvantaged and vulnerable pupils including those with persistent absence prior to Covid and those pupils who have struggled the most to engage with remote learning. Through our meetings with Designated Safeguarding Leads and Inclusion Leads, we are confident that schools have been doing everything they can to engage pupils in remote learning, to pick up new areas of risk/vulnerability and to follow referral routes.

We are currently collating and producing a short addendum to our Vulnerable Groups Report, published in the summer, capturing the strengths of current practices and areas that may need further attention in the coming months. We will also be producing revised safeguarding self-assessment tools for schools to use in the summer term.

Communications

Do please send through any queries or questions arising from the return to school guidance and local response.



Julie Lewis

Director Learning, Standards and School Partnerships

Perceval House 2 (NW) 9 Orange

14-16 Uxbridge Road

Ealing W5 2HL

Tel:0208 825 6473

Email: jlewis@ealing.gov.uk