

Back to school safely



Friday 5 March 2021

Dear Parents and Carers

Our teachers and school staff have been working hard to make sure that children have been learning both at home and in school during recent months. They are looking forward to welcoming all children back next week.

We know how difficult this time has been for children and families and want to thank you for your help in working with schools to support your children's learning and make sure that those children who could stay at home have done so.

We are writing to let you know about what we and schools are doing to keep Lewisham safe, with important information about the return to school, testing for those with or without coronavirus symptoms and vaccinations in Lewisham.

Return to school

Schools and colleges will be opening to all students from next week, Monday 8 March and attending school will be compulsory.

Please make sure you read all information that is sent from your child's school about the plans for reopening, as it will contain important details that are specific to that setting.

[Read more about the return to schools and colleges from Monday 8 March](#)

Testing for pupils aged 11 and over

Pupils aged 11 and over will take COVID-19 tests in school as they return. Schools and colleges may phase their return from 8 March to allow them to be tested before they start.

After the initial tests in school, pupils (aged 11+) will be given COVID-19 test kits to take twice a week at home.

To keep everyone safe in schools and the community, it is really important that children (11+) are tested regularly and we are asking for your support in making sure this can happen. Your school will give you more details about how this will work.

Rapid testing does not apply to primary aged children.

Rapid testing

Rapid testing (also known as lateral flow testing) is now available for people **without coronavirus symptoms** who are part of a household with primary, secondary and college-age children and young people, including childcare and support bubbles.

Rapid tests are available twice-weekly for every eligible person. Tests can be taken either at one of our rapid test centres, or you can collect a rapid test at a local test centre or use a new home ordering service.

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Rapid tests have been really successful in identifying those who have coronavirus with no symptoms, which helps stop the spread of the virus and prevents outbreaks.

[Read more about rapid lateral flow testing for households and bubbles of school pupils and staff](#)

There are three ways to access rapid testing twice a week:

1. Get tested at one of our rapid test sites in Catford, Downham, Deptford or Sydenham. [Book a rapid test in advance](#) or [check the website](#) for walk-in slots that may be available (walk-ins available after 11am at Catford, Downham and Sydenham sites)
2. [Collect rapid tests from a local testing centre](#). There will be more collection points added across Lewisham in the coming weeks.
3. [Order rapid tests to be delivered to your home](#)

Vaccinations

The vaccination roll out is well underway and thousands of Lewisham residents have already received a first dose of the vaccine.

Getting the vaccination is important because it gives you the best protection from COVID-19 and helps to protect your family, friends and everyone in your community.

The NHS will get in touch when it's your turn to be vaccinated. Please be patient and stay safe. When you are contacted, please make sure you attend your booked appointments.

[Attend an online information session about vaccinations](#)

[Find out more about the roll out of the COVID-19 vaccination in your area](#)

[Watch a video about vaccinations in a local GP practice](#)

When should you/your child stay at home?

Anyone who has COVID-19 symptoms, needs to stay at home (self-isolate) and get a test.

If someone living in the house with your child has symptoms, your child needs to stay at home and not go to school.

If your child has symptoms they must stay at home, not go to school and have a test. If the test is positive, please let school know immediately.

If in doubt, please check with your school.

For anyone with symptoms, you can [book a test online](#) or call 119.

If anyone is asked to self-isolate, it's really important they stay at home even if they don't feel unwell. They could still be infectious for up to 10 days.

Help is available if you're worried about self-isolating. You may be eligible for £500 support grant. Find out more [here](#) or call 020 8314 3535.

[Read the Government guidance for households with COVID-19 symptoms](#)

Face coverings

The guidance for people over 11 years (unless exempt) is to wear a face covering when in public places such as shops, shopping centres and public transport.

For secondary-age pupils, this now includes wearing a face covering in schools and classrooms where social distancing cannot be maintained. Your school will let you know about this.

We ask you to support your secondary-age children to wear a face covering.

Getting to and from school

We want to encourage as many children and young people as possible to walk, cycle or scoot to school where safe and possible.

TfL has dedicated bus services for school age children to reduce the mixing of age groups and young people are encouraged to use these services to and from school.

[Read more about travelling to school on public transport](#)

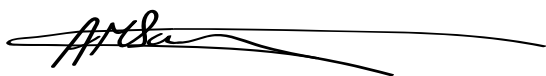
Help your child follow the rules

What can you do?

- Remind your child of the social distancing and mixing rules and help them plan their day to avoid breaking the rules.
- Remember- 'bubble' arrangements in school do not apply outside school – where everyone needs to follow social distancing and mixing rules.
- Parents and carers should not gather in groups outside school to socialise or arrange play dates, events etc. where households and children would mix outside permitted arrangements.
- Remind your child that washing hands frequently is as important as ever.

We know that children, young people and parents are looking forward to getting back to school. If you have any questions or concerns about next week's return to schools, please contact your school for advice and support.

We hope you found this information useful and once again, thank you for your continued support in keeping Lewisham safe at this time.



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Lewisham Council



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