

Director of Public Health Office
Sheffield Town Hall, Pinstone Street, Sheffield, S1 2HH
www.sheffield.gov.uk



4th March 2021

Dear Parent/Carer,

I wanted to write ahead of the wider opening of schools. I recognise that the winter has been very challenging. Thank you for all that you and your families have been doing to keep each other safe and reduce virus transmission. Spring is around the corner and we need to continue to follow the restrictions so that we can hopefully enjoy the summer with our families.

Since January you have been home schooling your children and I know how much pressure this adds to things. Thank you for all the time you have invested into supporting your child and helping them learn at home.

We all know how important school is and I'm sure children are now ready to get back to school to see their friends and start learning again in the classroom.

Schools will continue to put all the measures in place so that they are as safe as they can be. Your child will be familiar with the way school operates with:

- School bubbles and contact tracing if positive cases are identified
- Staggered start and finish times if required
- Social distancing will be in place wherever possible
- Regular handwashing
- Enhanced cleaning and ventilation

In secondary school pupils will be required to wear a face covering (unless they are exempt) in classrooms and during most activities unless it is possible to socially distance. They should also wear a face covering when they are moving around inside the school buildings, such as in corridors and communal areas.

In addition to this rapid Asymptomatic Testing with Lateral Flow Devices (LFDs) will now be in place for pupils in secondary schools. Testing for staff in both primary and secondary schools has been in place since January. 1 in 3 people who have the COVID-19 virus have no symptoms and do not know that they have it. Testing helps us find these cases. The testing programme is voluntary; however, I'd really ask that you take up the offer of testing for your child. Pre-school children and primary aged pupils do not need to be regularly tested.

Our webpage www.sheffield.gov.uk/backtoschoolsafely gives lots of other information about returning to school and detail about asymptomatic testing. The DfE parent/carers leaflet may be useful too:

https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/what-parents-and-carers-need-to-know-about-early-years-providers-schools-and-colleges-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-outbreak?utm_source=24%20February%202021%20C19&utm_medium=Daily%20Email%20C19&utm_campaign=DfE%20C19

The Local Authority Public Health team will continue to monitor case numbers and will review the situation regularly. I recognise that you may be anxious and concerned about your child returning to school. This is understandable. The measures that are in place in

school and the testing that is available will help us to monitor things carefully and enable children to get back to school safely.

For pupils and school staff returning to school from 8th March I'd remind everyone of what you can do to continue to reduce COVID-19 in your community.

What can you do to reduce Covid-19 in your community



Got Symptoms?

- a high temperature
- a new, continuous cough
- a loss or change to your sense of smell or taste

If you have **any** of these symptoms, however mild, even if you have got a negative LFD test result **you must stay home, don't go into school and book a free test** via our easy, accessible tests centres here in Sheffield. Most test results are now coming back within 24 hours. You can book a test by calling 119 or online at <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19>

The rapid asymptomatic LFD test kits **should not** be used if your child has symptoms. You should book a test at one of the test centres if you or your family start to develop symptoms.

Please remember that the country is still in `lock down` which means you still cannot have visitors at home or mix with people you don't live with unless they are in your family bubble. Meeting up out-doors is MUCH safer than indoor **and you are allowed to meet with one other person for exercise**. So if you can, enjoy some spring sunshine, blow away the cobwebs.

If people outside your family or bubble are coming into your home - e.g. maintenance workers or carers - reduce the risk by: Washing hands; wearing a face covering and keeping your distance if you can. Cleaning surfaces they have touched and opening windows for fresh air before and after their visit.

We have significantly slowed and reduced the spread of the virus in Sheffield. However, we need to continue to do this by following the restrictions. This will then allow us all to get back to enjoying more activities and time with our friends and families in the summer.

Yours sincerely

Greg Fell
Director of Public Health, Sheffield