

31st December 2020

Dear Parents,

As we approach the reopening of schools in January, I am writing to ensure you are aware of some of the recent developments regarding the COVID-19 pandemic and the most important measures you can take to protect your children during this time.

Tier 4 restrictions and the new virus strain

As of Sunday 20th December, the Prime Minister announced that London and areas in South and East England would be moving into Tier 4 restrictions. This was in response to concerns over a new variant of the original coronavirus which had led to increased transmission of the disease in these regions. On 30th December, the government announced that schools in some Tier 4 areas would remain **closed to the majority of pupils attending Ealing schools until 18th January**.

Primary schools

In the week beginning 4th January, primary schools have been asked to provide on-site learning for all vulnerable children and children of critical workers where this is needed. All other children will receive remote education once schools have made appropriate arrangements. Your child's school will be in contact with you to explain when remote learning will be available.

Early Years providers

Early Years providers are allowed to remain open for children although school-based provision is likely to be made available only for eligible groups. Your child's school will confirm arrangements.

Secondary schools

In the week beginning 4th January, secondary schools have been asked to provide on-site learning for all vulnerable children and children of critical workers where this is needed. Schools have been asked to prioritise remote learning for Years 11, 13 and other examination groups who are then expected to return to school on 11th January.

All other groups are expected to return to school on 18th January.

All other year groups will have access to remote education as soon as this can be delivered. Your child's school will be in contact with you to explain the arrangements.

Special schools and Alternative Provision

In the week beginning 4th January, special school providers and providers of alternative provision are expected to open for all pupils. Parents and carers are encouraged to send their children to school. Your child's school will contact you to outline arrangements.

Tier 4 guidance

Please note that the following activities are still permissible under Tier 4 guidance:

- registered childcare in settings other than in schools
- Supervised activities for children that are necessary to allow parents/carers to work, seek work, or undertake education or training including wrap-around care
- Parents can still take their children to school if their children are in the eligible groups
- People can continue existing arrangements for contact between parents and children where they live apart. This includes [childcare bubbles](#).

You can also refer to the full [Tier 4: stay at home guidance](#).

Asymptomatic testing in secondary schools and colleges

From January, rapid result tests will be provided to schools and colleges, starting with secondary schools and FE colleges, including special schools and alternative provision:

- for the school and college workforce to conduct weekly testing - this will help identify those who are carrying the virus without displaying symptoms, reducing the risk of transmission
- for students and pupils as well as the school and college workforce to conduct daily testing for those identified as close contacts of workforce colleagues, students or pupils that have tested positive - this ensures that they do not need to isolate and are able to continue to benefit from high quality, face to face education

For every group, testing is voluntary, but those who are eligible for tests are strongly encouraged to participate to reduce the risk of transmission within schools and colleges.

Your child's school will be in contact with you once arrangements for asymptomatic testing have been made. For further details please refer to [guidance regarding asymptomatic testing in schools and colleges](#).

Key public health messages

It is vitally important that we all observe:

Hands– wash our hands regularly for 20 seconds

Face– wear a cloth [face covering](#) (e.g. in shops, public transport)

Space– maintain a 2 metre social distance where possible

Isolate and test– if your child or someone in your household has Covid symptoms (high temperature, new continuous cough, loss of taste/smell), however mild, you must all [stay at home](#) and the person with symptoms should access a COVID-19 test without delay – ideally in the first day or two of showing symptoms.

You can apply for a test on the [NHS website](#) or by calling 119, and there are several testing sites in Ealing and London.

If your child tests positive for Covid-19

If the Covid-19 test is positive you should contact the school without delay – so that the school can undertake contact tracing and inform the relevant ‘close contacts’ to self-isolate. Your child’s school will inform you on how you should do this.

If the Covid-19 test is positive, please do engage with the [NHS Test and Trace](#) process for any contacts outside school.

Yours sincerely

Anna Bryden
Director of Public Health, Ealing Council