

Children's Services

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Dear Parent/Carer

Further to our letter dated 25 February, we met again with school leaders yesterday and wanted to update you about plans for the full opening of secondary schools from 8 March.

Schools are working incredibly hard to support your children back into school and I know that they have been communicating their detailed plans with you. In line with government guidance, schools are putting arrangements in place to test pupils on their return and we would ask for your co-operation and support during this time. The logistical challenges of setting this up are significant for schools, alongside the important focus on your children's learning and wellbeing. The first few weeks may bring some further disruption to routines and we recognise the additional pressure that this may create for families.

We appreciate the sacrifices that individuals and families have made throughout the coronavirus pandemic, and that these have been experienced in different ways over the last year. We would ask for your patience with schools as they approach this enormous task which is not straightforward and may mean that it takes a few weeks for some stability to be established. It is the aim of all of us to get young people's education back on track, whilst also ensuring that effective mechanisms are in place to mitigate transmission in schools.

Rapid testing is only one of the control mechanisms that schools will be putting in place and we appreciate your support in ensuring that your children adhere to the other measures that schools are implementing to reduce transmission. This includes, for secondary schools, the use of face masks which is recommended as an additional precautionary measure for a limited time during this period of high coronavirus prevalence in the community and will be reviewed at Easter. Wearing a face mask helps to protect those around us and therefore reduce the risk of rising infection rates.

Please note that schools are only providing tests for their students. As you may be aware, testing at home is also being made available for families with school aged children. Further information on this, including how to access testing for other household members, can be found at [Rapid lateral flow testing for households and bubbles of school pupils and staff - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/rapid-lateral-flow-testing-for-households-and-bubbles-of-school-pupils-and-staff)

We would like to take this opportunity to remind you that the alert level for coronavirus remains high and that we are still in a national lockdown. Even with increased levels of testing, we must remain alert and do all that we can to keep levels of infection to a minimum. We are very grateful for your support and hope that all your children have a safe and calm return to school.

Yours sincerely



Stuart Gallimore
Director of Children's Services



Darrell Gale FFPH
Director of Public Health