Director of Public Health
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Hertfordshire

Hertfordshire County Council
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Dear Parents and Carers

As children and young people begin returning to the classroom for face-to-face learning, I'm writing to update you on the measures we will be taking to keep children as safe as possible.

The return to school for all pupils is good news. We know that being in schools alongside their peers is hugely important to both their education and their health and wellbeing. We understand that the past few months of remote learning has been very challenging, and we thank you for the way you have adapted to support home learning. We also recognise the hard work and dedication of all schools who have continued to provide face-to-face learning for children considered vulnerable and those of critical workers.

Our work to provide infection control advice and guidance, and a dedicated helpdesk for teachers with a team of experienced staff, continues.

Testing

The biggest change at present is the introduction of rapid testing for coronavirus, often called Lateral Flow Testing, which will be a requirement for staff at primary schools and both students and staff at secondary schools twice a week. Your school will have been in touch about how they are planning to do this. If you have children in secondary school, please provide consent for them to be tested as soon as possible and support your school by encouraging children to continue testing regularly at home.

You have also been asked, as parents and carers of children still in education, to take twice weekly lateral flow tests. This process should help to identify cases and outbreaks more quickly and effectively than before. Doing this will help us to work together to reduce the spread of the virus in the community and protect people who are vulnerable. You can pick up a home testing kit at a local site or order online, visit www.gov.uk/order-coronavirus-rapid-lateral-flow-tests for more information. I would like to encourage all eligible residents to take these regular tests and support your school and wider community to keep safe and well.

There is information about how to record and report results in the information included with home testing kits. If you, or anyone in your household, receives a positive result you must also let any education settings know, including early years and colleges, so that they and the local public health team can manage the track and tracing process.

Face coverings

All secondary school children will also be required to wear a face covering (unless exempt) in shared areas such as corridors and canteens, and most will also be asked to wear these in classrooms where social distancing isn't possible.

What you can do to help

We really need your help, as parents and carers, to support these latest developments and ensure our schools can remain open and safe for all children and staff. There are some simple things you can do to support your school and community:

- **Drop children to school or collect them and leave straight away** – please do **not** wait or stand around at the school gates as this puts you, your children, school staff and other families at risk

- **If you know that your child's school entrance will be busy, please wear a face covering when attending** – your school may also ask that parents and carers wear a face covering for drop off and pick up, please take their advice

- **Don't arrange playdates, sleepovers or parties** – even if your children are now in a school bubble, bubbles only exist in school alongside stringent infection control measures. Outside of school, the latest Government guidance still applies to parents and children

- **If you have older children, please explain they cannot hang out with their friends just yet** – we know kids will find it hard to understand why they can't spend time with their friends from their school bubble outside of school. Please explain if we all follow the guidance now, we will hopefully be able to spend time together soon

- **Do not send children to school if they, or anyone in your household, has any symptoms of coronavirus**

You can find more information about symptoms of coronavirus in children at: www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/symptoms/coronavirus-in-children/

You can book a test at: www.gov.uk/get-coronavirus-test
If you have problems using the online service, or no online access, call: 119

I'd like to once again thank you and your families for all you are doing to play your part in protecting Hertfordshire residents right now. If we all continue to work together, we can look forward to a more hopeful, brighter future and the return to some sense of normality very soon.

Yours sincerely

Jim McManus
Director of Public Health