

12 March 2021

Dear Parents and Carers,

A big thank you to you all!

When I last wrote to you, the Trust and school leaders were busy making preparations for children's safe return to school on 8 March 2021. I am really pleased to say that this has gone extremely well. It has been wonderful to see children happy and excited to be with their friends and teachers again. Every day attendance rates in all Trust schools have been high across all age groups which is both pleasing and reassuring. As I have continually said throughout this awful pandemic, we will continue to ensure we retain an absolute focus on keeping children and staff safe. Over the coming weeks we will remain vigilant in making sure all our covid-safe practices are kept under constant review.

We have made a great start and I would like to thank you for supporting your child's return to school and preparing them so well. In this letter I would like to provide further clarification on two aspects of covid-safety that remain central to keeping everyone well. Please could I ask for your further support on both of these important issues.

1. The wearing of face coverings by parents matters

Thank you to all parents and carers who are wearing face coverings when bringing children to school and collecting them at the end of the day. This is an important feature of our ongoing risk management and is important in keeping every member of the school community safe. Please could I ask all parents and carers to help us by wearing a face covering. We know this helps to avoid transmission of the virus within the community. Ultimately, it may also help to avoid the further closure of schools that we are all trying so hard to avoid. We want our children to be able to stay in school and continue their education as far as is possible.

Going forwards face masks will be made available at the school gates for adult use only and we ask that all parents and carers wear them unless they are exempt for medical reasons.

2. Clarification about LFD and PCR testing requirements

NHS Test and Trace is making rapid LFD testing more readily available alongside standard lab-based PCR tests. Both tests play a different, but crucial role in the fight against COVID-19. Around 1 in 3 individuals with COVID-19 do not display symptoms. Opening testing up, through LFD tests, to catch those showing no symptoms will help to find positive cases earlier and to break hidden chains of transmission.

There has been a lot of information in the press and social media about the LFD testing of secondary school pupils. **This does not apply to primary schools.** At the present time, the testing arrangements for primary schools are as follows and we will keep you fully informed if this changes in the future:

- Rapid regular LFD testing twice weekly is available to all primary school staff.
- Nursery and primary school aged children are **NOT** being asked to be tested as evidence continues to show that children are at low risk from the virus and are very unlikely to get seriously ill.
- Anyone (adult or child) with Covid-19 symptoms should arrange to get tested immediately. **NHS 111 online coronavirus service** can help with accessing a test straight away.
- Anyone with COVID-19 [symptoms](#) or a positive test result should stay at home and self-isolate immediately for 10 days. This is because the infection could be passed on to others, even if an individual does not have symptoms.
- Where both a LFD test and a PCR test have been taken, the results of the PCR Test will be considered as the accurate result. For example, in the event that the PCR test is negative – that the child does not have Covid 19 – this **overrides the lateral flow test** if it was taken at home and the child should therefore return to school (source Gov.UK 9 March 2021).
- If you are a **member of a household, childcare or support bubble of a pupil**, you can now get a twice-weekly test:
 - through your employer if they offer testing to employees
 - at a local asymptomatic test site, managed by your local authority
 - by [collecting a home test kit](#) from a test site
 - by ordering a [home test kit online](#)

Finally, please can I remind all parents and carers that government is clear that **full attendance is now mandatory** for all pupils except those who have been advised to continue to shield because they are clinically extremely vulnerable. Trust schools will work alongside you to address any ongoing concerns you may have, so please make contact and we will do everything we can to help.

We are getting through this by continuing to work together and hopefully the summer will bring greater freedoms for us all.

Thank you again for your amazing support and understanding.

Kindest regards,



Robert Bowater
Trust CEO