

# CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE RETURNING TO SCHOOL

**Health Information for Parents and Carers**

SEPTEMBER 2020



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## Welcoming children back to school

The government plans for all children and young people to return to school and college full time from the beginning of the autumn term. Since lockdown when schools and colleges restricted their opening in March, the prevalence of coronavirus (COVID-19) has decreased, the NHS Test and Trace system has been established, and there is much better understanding about how to keep schools safe.

Schools are prepared to keep children safe and happy. Most children will adapt quickly and effectively to a different way of being in school, and the school will provide support to those who need more help.

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## I'm worried about my child going back to school

It is understandable that people are worried about COVID-19. There is good evidence that primary school age children are less likely to catch COVID-19. There is also clear evidence that the majority of children and teenagers who catch COVID-19 have mild symptoms or no symptoms at all. There is no evidence that children transmit the disease any more than adults.

School is important to learn and develop emotional and social skills, but the health and safety of children, teaching staff and their families is the top priority. School attendance will again be mandatory from the beginning of the new academic year for children aged 5-16. For parents and carers of children of compulsory school age, this means that from September you have a legal duty to send your child to school regularly.

Schools are putting in place a number of safety measures aimed at protecting children, staff and families and reducing the spread of the virus as more children return to school.

The chance of getting coronavirus and becoming seriously ill depends on many different things including age, gender, other existing illnesses, where

in the country you live and your job. Some communities, for example Black, Asian and minority ethnic groups, have been found to be at higher risk. The reasons behind this increased risk are complex but seem to relate to health factors like the presence of additional conditions such as diabetes and high blood pressure, as well as social factors such as occupation.

Adults and children who are clinically extremely vulnerable to coronavirus were advised to shield during the height of the pandemic. As the rates of transmission of coronavirus have reduced, [the government is advising that members of this group do not need to shield at the moment](#). This may change if transmission of COVID-19 increases. Some pupils no longer required to shield but who generally remain under the care of a specialist health professional may need to discuss their care with their health professional before returning to school.

If you are concerned about the risk for anyone in your family, talk through your concerns with your GP or your school. You can also discuss these with the School Health Team by emailing [nem-tr.0-19universalspawf@nhs.net](mailto:nem-tr.0-19universalspawf@nhs.net) or find local telephone numbers [here](#).

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## What will schools have in place to keep children safe?

The Council has been working closely with schools to prioritise the safety of children, teaching staff and families. The government has designed a system of controls to keep schools safe which include:

1. Ensuring pupils and staff only come to school if they and other members of their household are well.
2. Implementing regular, thorough handwashing.
3. Practicing good hygiene and the 'catch it, bin it, kill it' approach to coughs and sneezes.
4. Introducing enhanced cleaning including of high-touch surfaces.
5. Limiting contact by keeping children, young people and staff who learn and socialise together within a 'bubble' and separate from other 'bubbles'. Keeping children within the same group is similar to

keeping within family groups. It limits the amount of social mixing to help reduce the spread of the virus.

6. The government is revising its guidance on face coverings for staff and children in Year 7 or above in England. Nationwide, while the government is not recommending face coverings are necessary, schools will have the discretion to require face coverings in communal areas if they believe that is right in their particular circumstances.

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## What happens if someone has symptoms of COVID-19?

1. If your child or anyone in your household have symptoms (a temperature or a new, continuous cough, or loss of/change to their sense of taste or smell) please let your school know, and keep your child and the rest of your household at home.
2. If a child or member of staff gets these symptoms in school, they will be sent home with advice about what to do.
3. Anyone with symptoms needs to self-isolate along with all of their household and get tested as soon as possible. Find out how to get a test [here](#) or you can order a test by calling 119. In Waltham Forest, there is a drive in testing site at The Score Centre, Leyton E10 5JY and a walk in testing site at Stanley Road car park, Leyton E10 7FF.
4. If the test is negative, the child or staff member, and their household, can leave self-isolation and return to school.
5. If a child or member of staff tests positive, then they will be required to self-isolate for 10 days (from when symptoms started). The rest of their 'bubble' group will be sent home to self-isolate for 14 days. The households of these other children in the 'bubble' do not need to isolate, unless their child also develops symptoms.

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## What can I do to keep everyone safe?

Check everyone at home is well before your child goes to school and stay at home if anyone has symptoms of COVID-19. If your child does develop symptoms, you should arrange for them to [get a test](#) and inform their school or college of the results.

**Support schools and colleges:** It is important that parents help schools and colleges to implement [required safety measures](#). If your child is asked to self-isolate for 14 days after being in close contact with someone who has tested positive, it is important that they do so.

**Hygiene and handwashing is vital:** Wash hands regularly for 20 seconds, with soap and running water, especially before and after school, before and after eating, and after using a tissue or the toilet.

**Social distancing outside school:** Only one parent or carer should take your child to school. Do not stay and chat at the school gates, as there is a significant risk of transmission. The safest and healthiest way to travel to school is outdoors: on foot, or by bike or scooter. Please be patient and help the school to ensure that children can be collected safely at the end of the day. Outside of school, it is also important you follow guidance on meeting other individuals and households.

*“Keeping the school community safe is a team effort. There is a vital role for families to play so that children can learn as safely as possible.”*

Joe McDonnell, Director of Public Health, London Borough of Waltham Forest

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## How should we travel to school in September?

Following the School Travel Survey in July 2020, it was great to see that 67 per cent of parents are looking to use sustainable travel. Whether you want to walk, cycle or scoot we've got the infrastructure to make sustainable travel safe and enjoyable for you and your family. You can read more and get further advice on our [Enjoy Waltham Forest Website](#).

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## Where can I find more information?

There is more information available for parents and carers on the government website [here](#). You can also find information on the Council's website [here](#). For accessible and translated information about coronavirus, visit this [website](#).

**KEEP WALTHAM FOREST SAFE**

**Waltham Forest**

**NHS**  
Test and Trace

**COVID SYMPTOMS?  
GET TESTED NOW.**

**nhs.uk/coronavirus OR CALL 119**

Protect your friends and family

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**We look forward to welcoming you back!**