

# Children returning to primary school

Health information for parents and carers



*This leaflet was produced by Haringey Public Health*

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*Public Health are keeping this guidance under constant review.*

# Should I be worried about sending my child back to school?

It is understandable that many people are worried about COVID-19, however the current risk to children becoming severely ill from the virus is very low. It is also important to remember that for the vast majority of children, the benefits of being back in school far outweigh the very low risk of contracting COVID-19.

Some communities, for example Black, Asian and minority ethnic groups are thought to be at higher risk of getting severely ill from the virus; but this risk may be related not just to ethnicity, but also to the presence of additional health conditions such as diabetes and hypertension/high blood pressure – as well as other factors. If you are concerned about the risk for anyone in your family, talk through your concerns with your local health care professional, GP or school. You can also discuss your concerns with the School Health Team who can be reached on 020 3224 2833 or email [whh-tr.haringeyschoolnursing@nhs.net](mailto:whh-tr.haringeyschoolnursing@nhs.net).

School is an important place to learn and develop both emotional and social skills, and it is key that all children return to school in September to minimise the possible longer-term impact of the pandemic on children's education, wellbeing and wider development.

Rest assured that the health and safety of children, teaching staff and their families will always be top priority, and schools are putting in place a number of safety measures to reduce the spread of the virus as children return to school.



# What will happen if I don't send my child back to school?

Missing out on more time in the classroom risks pupils falling behind. School attendance will therefore again become mandatory from the new school year in September 2020. This means that from September, the usual rules on school attendance will apply and it will be the responsibility of parents and carers to ensure that their child attends school regularly. Parents and carers of children who do not attend school without a good reason, will be at risk of sanctions such as fixed penalty notices and potential legal action, in line with the Council's code of conduct.

Shielding advice for all vulnerable adults and children paused from the 1<sup>st</sup> August (subject to a continued decline of community transmission of COVID-19), meaning children should be able to return to school. It is important to note that:

- A small number of children will still be unable to attend school because they are self-isolating and have had symptoms of a positive test result; or because they are a close contact of someone who has COVID-19
- The children who remain on the shielded list can return to school, as can those who have family members who are shielding
- If rates of the virus rise in local areas, children (or family members) from that area (and that area only) will be advised to shield (and therefore may be temporary absent from school)
- Children who no longer require to shield but remain under the care of a specialist health professional may need to discuss their care with their health professional before returning to school.

Please remember to let your school know, if for any reason, your child isn't able to come back to school.

# What steps will schools take to keep children safe?

The Council has been working closely with schools to prioritise the safety of children, teaching staff and families upon returning in the new school year.

The steps each school take may look slightly different as they will need to consider their own school environment and the needs of their children, but they will all include these 5 key actions to ensure a safe return:

1. Frequent hand washing and good hygiene
2. Ensuring children and staff only come to school if they are well – and staying home if they are not feeling well
3. Clear procedures if a child or staff member show symptoms at school
4. Enhanced cleaning arrangements including cleaning frequently touched surfaces
5. Reducing contacts between children and staff and maximising distancing between those within school wherever possible. This could mean grouping children together, avoiding contact between groups, arranging classrooms with forward facing desks, and staff maintaining distance from children and other staff as much as possible.



# What happens if someone in the family isn't feeling well?

1. It is important that parents and carers keep any child at home who is not feeling well – for whatever reason. Children should not return to school until they feel better. Parents and carers should check with their local GP if a child is not feeling well for more advice.
2. If your child, yourself or anyone in your household have symptoms of COVID-19 such as a **temperature**, or a **new continuous cough (this means coughing a lot, for more than an hour, or 3 or more coughing episodes in 24 hours)**, or **loss of/change to their sense of taste or smell** they cannot come into school and should be kept at home, along with the rest of your household
3. If a child or staff member gets any of the symptoms mentioned above while in school, they will be sent home with advice about what to do
4. Anyone with COVID-19 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, and how long to self-isolate at [nhs.uk/coronavirus](https://www.nhs.uk/coronavirus). All children can be tested, including children under 5, but children aged 11 and under will need to be helped by their parents/carers if using a home testing kit
5. It is important to provide details of anyone you or your child have been in close contact with if test results are positive. NHS Test and Trace will contact you for this information.
6. If the test is negative, and person no longer has symptoms, the child and their household can leave self-isolation and return to school.
7. If a child or staff member tests positive, then the rest of their small class group will be sent home to self-isolate for 14 days.
8. The households of those children (the children in the same group as the child or staff member testing positive) do not need to self-isolate. They would only have to self-isolate if someone within their own household develops symptoms.



# What can I do to keep my child and family safe?

Check everyone at home is well before your child goes to school and stay at home if anyone has symptoms of COVID-19.

## Hygiene

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.

## Vaccinations

Immunisations protect your child's health so please make sure your child's vaccination record is up-to-date by checking your child's Red Book, and if you are unsure check with your local GP or Health Visitor. If your child was partially or fully vaccinated in another country, you should also check with your GP who can advise if this is sufficient for the UK.

## Social distancing outside school

Only one parent or carer should take your child to school. Do not stay and chat at the school gates. The safest and healthiest way to travel to school is outdoors: on foot, by bike or scooter.

## Welcome Back!

Schools will do everything they can to keep children safe and happy.

Most children will adapt quickly and well to a different way of being in school and the school will provide support to those who need more help.