

Parents / Carers
Hackney maintained schools,
academies & settings

19 July 2021

Dear Parent / Carer,


Covid 19 - changes to arrangements in schools, testing, bubbles and summer activities

As the end of the academic year draws closer we wanted to thank all children, young people and their families who have worked with our schools & settings to keep them open and safe, as well as to protect the wider community.

You will no doubt be aware that the government has recently announced the lifting of many Covid-19 restrictions from 19 July. This will change the way schools and settings have been working over recent months to respond to the pandemic.

Whilst the following changes come into place from 19 July 2021, in liaison with Hackney Public Health, your school may not choose to implement all of them until the start of the Autumn Term.

Summer activities and early years settings staying open during August will, however, implement the below changes from Monday, 19 July:

- **Bubbles** - schools & settings will no longer be required to keep children & young people in consistent groups (bubbles).
 - **Contact tracing** - identifying close contacts of positive Covid-19 cases will be undertaken by NHS Test & Trace (referring to the school or setting in some instances).
 - **Self isolation** - from 16 August 2021, children & young people under the age of 18 and anyone over 18 who is double vaccinated will no longer be required to self isolate if they are a close contact with someone with COVID-19 symptoms or who has tested positive. Instead, NHS Test & Trace will identify and contact close contacts to alert them and advise them to take a PCR test. We strongly encourage anyone advised to take a PCR test to do so. People who test positive must, however, self isolate for 10 days as before.
 - **Face coverings** - face coverings are no longer advised in education settings by the government. Hackney Public Health, however, have advised that whilst infection levels remain high, these continue to be worn in communal areas and where it is hard to maintain social distance to mitigate possible transmission. Please check with your school what their policy on face coverings is. We support schools to maintain rigorous
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approaches to prevent infections.

Testing

An increase in the number of Covid-19 cases in Hackney is being seen and regular testing using home LFD (lateral flow device) test kits continues to be a really important way you and your family can help to stop the spread of the virus - particularly where people may not have any symptoms and may be unknowingly spreading the virus to others in school or their community.

Home Covid-19 tests are quick and easy to use and reporting results has recently been made even easier for families. See the [Council's Coronavirus support webpage](#) for more information and where to get test kits from.

Testing over the holidays - Over the summer, staff and secondary pupils should continue to test regularly (twice a week) if they are attending settings that remain open, such as summer schools and out of school activities based in school settings. If you are travelling abroad, you will also need to complete tests before and after your return. The government has developed a traffic light system for different countries. Please make sure you understand the requirements for the countries you may be returning from - see [here](#) for more information.

Testing in September for secondary aged young people

At the start of the Autumn term in September, all secondary pupils will be asked to complete 2 Covid-19 tests (3-5 days apart) onsite at school. In some cases, this may start just before the beginning of term and some schools may stagger the return of pupils across the first week to manage this. Your school will be in touch to let you know how this will happen. After this, twice weekly home testing continues to be advised, but will be reviewed at the end of September.

Reporting test results - this is almost as important as doing the test itself. You should report home test results if they are positive or negative online at www.gov.uk/report-covid19-result or by phone on 119. Reporting helps to see where the virus is spreading, as much as where it is not spreading. NHS Test & Trace have recently made reporting even easier by allowing you to set up a "household" account which allows you to save your children's details to your own user account.

Vaccination - please also remember that getting vaccinated should help reduce the rates of serious illness, save lives and reduce pressure on the NHS and social care services. See Hackney's website [here](#) for more information on vaccination.

And finally, we are grateful for all the support you have given and continue to give to reduce the risk of Covid-19 infection. Please be assured that we want to ensure that our schools and settings remain open during the pandemic and that they continue to be safe places for your child to learn. Hackney Education, Hackney Public Health and our schools & settings will, therefore, continue to work together to identify and implement any local arrangements needed to reduce the spread of the virus, especially where increasing numbers of cases may be seen locally.

Yours sincerely,



Annie Gammon
Director of Education



Dr Sandra Husbands
Director of Public Health