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Ref: JM/CovidSchoolPublicHealthUpdate  
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Dear Parent/Carer,

### **Letter from the Director of Public Health, Waltham Forest**

I am writing to you in light of the [changes in national COVID-19 guidance](#) that were announced last week, and to summarise the public health advice that we are giving to all schools in Waltham Forest.

Last week, the government announced that all remaining COVID-19 regulations ended on 24 February and free mass testing will stop on 1 April.

Although legal requirements have been removed, national **public health guidance for people with COVID-19 is staying the same until 1 April. Getting a test and staying home if you have symptoms, and self-isolating if you get a positive test result remain the most effective way to stop the spread of the virus.** Whilst case rates have reduced in recent weeks, the overall number of cases remains higher than it was for most of last year, and we want to see that reduction continue ahead of the changes to the national programme on 1 April.

The below message contains detailed guidance on what the next month will look like. We will write to all parents and carers ahead of 1 April, to let you know what the advice will be from that point.

#### Positive test results

#### **Children who test positive for COVID-19 should self-isolate and should not come into school.**

They can take an LFD test from 5 days after their symptoms started (or 5 days from the day their test was taken if they did not have symptoms) followed by another LFD test the next day. If both these test results are negative, they should return to school, as long as they feel well enough to do so and do not have a temperature. Otherwise, they should continue to isolate until they have 2 days of negative tests, or have completed 10 days of isolation, whichever comes first, just as before.

#### Symptoms

**If your child has symptoms of COVID-19 they should arrange to get a PCR test** at one of Waltham Forest's [local PCR testing sites](#), or [order a PCR test](#) online. They are advised to stay at home and avoid contact with other people while they are waiting for the test result.

#### Contacts

The national contact tracing service is no longer in operation, and there is now different guidance in place for contacts: unvaccinated close contacts of COVID-19 cases no longer have to self-isolate; and vaccinated close contacts are no longer advised to do daily LFD tests.

**Children and young people who usually attend an education or childcare setting and who live with someone who has COVID-19 should continue to attend the setting as normal.** However, if a child who lives in the same household as an active case of COVID-19 also has symptoms (including broader symptoms such as fatigue, sore throat or headache), they should stay at home until they have a negative PCR test.

People who live in the same household as someone with COVID-19 are at the highest risk of becoming infected. All household contacts should try to minimise contact with the person who has COVID-19;

avoid contact with anyone who is at higher risk of becoming severely unwell with COVID-19; limit close contact with other people outside their household; wear a face covering in crowded or indoor spaces; look out for symptoms of COVID-19 and get a PCR test if they experience any symptoms.

### Testing

**Twice weekly LFD testing is no longer recommended for pupils at most schools.** Regular LFD testing is still recommended for staff, students and pupils in SEND and alternative provision settings – if this applies to your child, the school will have more details.

Until 1 April, LFD and PCR tests are available for everyone via the same routes as previously:

- LFD test kits can be [ordered online](#), [picked up at pharmacies using a Collect Code](#), or collected from one of Waltham Forest's [local LFD testing sites](#).
- If your child has symptoms of COVID-19 they should arrange to get a PCR test at one of Waltham Forest's [local PCR testing sites](#), or [order a PCR test](#) online. They are advised to stay at home and avoid contact with other people while they are waiting for the test result.

In addition, extra testing may be required in a school which has a high number of cases. In this instance, tests will be provided for pupils.

### Preventing spread

We have asked schools to continue to follow steps to minimise the risk of the virus spreading at school. This includes things like improving indoor ventilation, extra cleaning and encouraging handwashing, which also reduce the risks from other diseases within schools. Please note, face coverings are not routinely required for staff or pupils in any schools, but I continue to support those secondary schools that wish to maintain this. Face coverings may still be advised as part of temporary measures to support schools that have a high number of COVID-19 cases.

### Vaccination

#### **Getting vaccinated offers the best protection against COVID-19.**

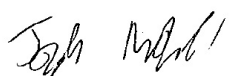
Children aged 12 and older can get two doses of the vaccine. As well as helping to reduce the chance of catching the virus, the vaccine means that even if a vaccinated child still catches COVID-19, it is much, much less likely to be harmful. The vaccine greatly increases protection even in those who have already had COVID-19, reducing risk from re-infection.

Some secondary schools have vaccination clinics coming up in the next few weeks, and there are also several community clinics that you can take your child to if you would like to be with them when they get the vaccine. Please visit <https://linktr.ee/lbwalthamforest> for further details and to book an appointment.

Soon children aged 5-11 will also be able to get vaccinated; we will be in touch with further details in the coming weeks.

Thank you again for your cooperation and support.

Yours faithfully,



Joe McDonnell  
Director of Public Health