

Dear Parents & Carers

Return to education settings: safety measures

We wanted to write to you to say how heartening it has been to see so many of our pupils return to school, seeing and learning again with their friends. We also wanted to say thank you for all your support in getting your children back, for preparing them for this new academic year.

Wigan schools, colleges and child-care settings have worked very hard to make sure they are as safe as possible for children and young people to return. It is really important that you support your school by following their safety measures. The Council has worked closely with schools and settings to make sure they are responding to the latest guidance in relation to COVID-19.

However, unfortunately this will not necessarily prevent a positive case of COVID-19 emerging within the school community. We appreciate that many children have already experienced further disruption to their learning through 'bubbles' having to isolate and we are asking for your support in partnership with your schools and your community to play your part in helping us to have a level of control over the spread of the virus.

What Role can Parents and Children Play?

We are trying very hard to keep our schools and settings open. To do this, we need to make sure that anyone with a possible infection does not come to their school or setting. If anyone becomes symptomatic whilst at the school/setting they will need to leave the site as soon as possible.

As Wigan are entering into "tier 1" of government intervention, the guidance on wearing a face covering now applies for all pupils in year 7 upwards and adults within the educational setting. Face coverings should be worn by adults and pupils when moving around the premises, outside of classrooms, such as in corridors and communal areas where social distancing cannot easily be maintained.

Some individuals are exempt from wearing face coverings. This applies to those who:

- cannot put on, wear or remove a face covering because of a physical or mental illness or impairment or disability
- speak to or provide assistance to someone who relies on lip reading, clear sound or facial expression to communicate

In addition, it is also really important that we all follow the other preventative measures that have been put into place for everyone's safety:

- **The "rule of six" limiting the number of people you can meet who you do not live with (or have formed a support bubble with) applies outdoors as well as indoors and includes children. Children who are isolating MUST NOT attend any out of school activity clubs or be playing outside during this time.**

- Please keep two metres away from any one you do not live with and move away from the school gates so that we can keep the main routes in and out of our schools clear for both the school and any close neighbours.
- If you have older children who travel to school independently, please remind them of this too. Older children isolating **SHOULD NOT** be sent to pick younger siblings up from school.
- Continue to regularly wash your hands and wear a face covering where required
- Remind children and young people that they **MUST** wear a mask whilst traveling on any transport.

Self-Isolation

We understand that children having to stay at home – or even whole households – is not easy or ideal. In these circumstances your child should continue to access education provided by the school while they are at home. Although we completely understand how upsetting this may be for your child and the disruption this may cause, this is an essential part of the process to reduce infection and your headteacher is following national guidance.

We have previously circulated a Quick Guide for parents. We have enclosed that again to answer questions on what to do if you think you or a family member has symptoms. In addition, we have included some answers to frequently asked questions attached to this letter.

Thank you for your ongoing understanding and support.

Kate Ardern

Director – Public Health

Wigan Council



Cath Pealing

Assistant Director – Education

Wigan Council



Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

What are the symptoms of COVID-19?

The symptoms of COVID-19 are a new continuous cough; a high temperature; or a loss of taste or smell

What is the difference between a new continuous cough and a normal cough (for example, from a cold)?

A new continuous cough may include:

- Coughing a lot for an hour or more
- Three or more coughing episodes in a 24-hour period

The new continuous cough should be 'out of the ordinary' for your child

What does self-isolation mean?

Self-isolation means staying at home and not leaving for any reason other than to get a COVID-19 test. Sometimes one person will need to self-isolate and sometimes the whole household. This is explained in the attached grid which sets out what to do in different situations. You should also not have visitors to your house during this time, other than to drop off items at the door – for example, shopping. If you have been advised to self-isolate and have no support network to help you access basics such as food shopping please phone our **Self Isolation support line on 01942 489 018**

My child/someone in my household has symptoms but I can't get a test. What do I do?

We're aware that, due to national capacity problems, it might be difficult to access covid-19 testing appointments when someone in your household develops symptoms. Please follow the suggestions below to access testing:

- Visit <https://www.gov.uk/get-coronavirus-test>

Enter the details of the person who has symptoms, and select either a walk-in or drive-in test appointment or (when available) a postal test kit. Postal test kits seem to become available after 7am, normally arrive the next day, and are delivered by Amazon. If you have a choice, a same-day test appointment will normally give a faster result

If there are no appointments, keep trying at intervals throughout the day: o New appointments tend to be released just after 8am, 10am, 12pm and so on throughout the day. You can get the screen to update by switching between walk-in and drive-in options. If you don't have internet access, ask someone who does have internet access to try for you.

- Phone 119 to request a test

You can phone 119 to request a test. You should still expect to need to try multiple times.

Whilst we understand this can be very frustrating and time-consuming, please do keep trying until you get a test and do not send your child to school if they are symptomatic.

