

Date: 9th November 2020

Dear Parent/Carer,

I hope you have had an enjoyable half term break. For those who are continuing to self-isolate following the end of half term, thank you for continuing your isolation period and we will look forward to seeing you back at school as soon as you are able to.

You may be aware that we have seen an increase in COVID-19 cases across our schools. We know that this is having an impact on our pupils, parents/caregivers, and staff as a result. Over recent weeks, across all schools and educational settings, we have seen an increase in both the number of confirmed cases, and the number of schools reporting confirmed cases in both students and staff across the borough since pupils returned to school in September. You may have experienced your child being sent home and asked to isolate due to being a contact or because the school has too many staff isolating to enable all pupils to attend school. We know that this can be frustrating, inconvenient, and stressful for all concerned but that schools may need to do this to keep your children safe.

It is important, to stress that the majority of transmission that we are seeing in Wigan is not happening in schools. This is a testament to the work that our schools and educational settings have put into place to make things as safe as possible for our children and young people, parents and caregivers, and staff. That said, whilst our schools have put in place significant safety measures which reduces as far as possible the risks to staff, pupils, and parents/caregivers, the ability of our schools to remain open on a consistent basis is also dependent on us all playing our part outside of school.

The additional measures that the Government has imposed have been put in place in order to bring the rate of infection down and keep residents as safe as possible. It is therefore essential that we all follow the rules in order to bring infection rates down and make it easier on our schools.

We now need to reinforce the message that, if your child is asked to self-isolate by their school for a period of time, they must follow the Government's '[Stay at Home](#)' guidance. Please note, you could be fined if you do not stay at home and self-isolate following a positive test result for COVID-19 or if you are notified that you need to self-isolate. Other really important measures we all need to follow are:

- Ensuring we follow important preventative measures when we are dropping off and picking up our children, such as social distancing and wearing a face covering.
- Ensuring schools are notified when someone in the household tests positive.
- Ensuring that children are not dropped off or picked up by someone who should be isolating.
- Ensuring your child has a mask when travelling on public transport (where appropriate)

In an attempt to prevent further restrictions and lockdown measures, each area in Greater Manchester has now established an Enforcement and Compliance Team. The team's aim is to encourage compliance with any current restrictions on individuals, families and businesses and to use enforcement action when compliance is repeatedly or blatantly being ignored.

Despite the fantastic work our schools have put in to reduce the risks of re-opening schools, there has clearly been an impact on our schools from COVID-19. Both the Chief and Deputy Medical Officers and the Government stressed in September that there is no completely risk-free option available to us, and that the risks from opening schools up again in September had to be balanced against the impacts on children from not attending school. We know that not attending school is detrimental to children's cognitive and physical development, academic learning, emotional and mental health and wellbeing, and greatly reduces their life-long outcomes. Certainly, we have heard so many positive and heart-warming stories of Wigan's children and young people enjoying learning and seeing their friends again over the last few weeks, and I am looking forward to hearing more of these stories over the rest of the term.

Thank you for your continued support of our schools in these challenging times.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kate Ardern', written in a cursive style.

Professor Kate Ardern MBChB MSc FFPH  
Director of Public Health

## **October Half Term Q&A for Parents**

This document is intended to provide parents in Wigan with information in relation to some of the updated guidance which has been made available since the start of the autumn term, and some useful reminders.

The information in the below answers comes from a range of sources, which are linked to where available on the Internet:

- [New National Restrictions from 5<sup>th</sup> November, updated 1<sup>st</sup> November 2020](#)
- [Use of the NHS COVID 19 app in schools and further education settings](#)
- [Face coverings in education settings](#)
- [‘Stay at Home’ guidance](#)
- [Education and childcare settings: New National Restrictions from 5 November 2020](#)

NOTE: The content of the FAQ is correct as of 12pm on 5<sup>th</sup> November 2020

### **Q. The Government has announced new national restrictions, due to come in on the 5<sup>th</sup> November. How does this affect me and will it affect my child’s attendance at school?**

From Thursday 5 November until Wednesday 2 December, the Government is requiring people to stay at home, except for specific purposes, preventing gathering with people you do not live with, except for specific purposes, and closing certain businesses and venues. Full details can be found on the Gov.uk [website](#), or on the Wigan Council Coronavirus update and advice [page](#).

Schools are expected to remain open under the new national restrictions, and one of the permitted reasons for leaving your home is for childcare or education where this is not provided online. Parents/caregivers should continue to send their children and young people to school unless they have been advised to self-isolate or are part of the Clinically Extremely Vulnerable group of children. The government continue to encourage people to cycle or walk where possible and plan ahead to avoid busy times on public transport.

Other permitted reasons for leaving home include for work purposes where you cannot work from home, to exercise outdoors or to visit an outdoor public place (note, there are specific restrictions on the numbers and groups of people within this), for medical reasons, shopping for food and essentials, to provide care for a vulnerable person or as a volunteer, or to avoid risk of injury or harm. You must not meet socially indoors with family or friends unless they are part of your household - meaning the people you live with - or support bubble.

Parents will still be able to access some registered childcare and other childcare activities (including wraparound care) where reasonably necessary, to enable parents to work, or for respite care. Early years settings can remain open, and parents are able to form a childcare bubble with another household for the purposes of informal childcare, where the child is 13 or under.

All social distancing and infection prevention measures continue under these restrictions.

If you are over 60 or clinically vulnerable, you could be at higher risk of severe illness from coronavirus. You should be especially careful to follow the rules and minimise your contacts with others, should continue to wash your hands carefully and more frequently than usual, and maintain thorough cleaning of frequently touched areas in your home and/or workspace. There is a further group of people who are defined, as Clinically Extremely Vulnerable to coronavirus. The Government is advising people within this group to work from home. If they cannot work from home, they are advised not to go to work, and may be eligible for Statutory Sick Pay (SSP) or Employment Support Allowance (ESA). Updated guidance on shielding is due to be published shortly.

## **Q. Should my child wear a face covering in school?**

In both early years settings and primary schools, there is no change to the existing position. It is not mandatory for staff and visitors to wear face coverings. In situations where social distancing between adults in settings is not possible, settings can recommend the use of face coverings for adults on site, for both staff and visitors.

In schools where pupils in year 7 and above are educated, 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. This was already the case for pupils in year 7 and above, and staff and visitors in Wigan schools as we were previously under the 'High' and 'Very High' local alert levels. Face coverings should also be worn by pupils in year 7 and above when travelling on dedicated school transport to secondary school or college.

Some individuals are exempt from wearing face coverings and the Government expect adults and pupils to be sensitive to those needs.

## **Q. What happens if my child falls ill?**

Anyone who develops symptoms of COVID-19, or whose household member develops symptoms, should immediately self-isolate. They should not attend school.

You should let the school know of your absence by phone. The school will record this information and direct you to the '[Stay at Home](#)' guidance, which currently advises that the person with symptoms should isolate for 10 days starting from the first day of their symptoms and the rest of their household for 14 days. If your child is in school when they start showing COVID-19 symptoms, the school will isolate them in a safe place and contact you immediately.

You must then arrange for your child to have a COVID 19 test. You can do this via [nhs.uk](https://www.nhs.uk) or by contacting NHS 119 via telephone. If the test is negative, and your child feels well and no longer has symptoms similar to COVID-19, they can stop self-isolating. However, they could still have another virus, such as a cold or flu, in which case it is still best to avoid contact with other people until they are better.

If your child tests positive for COVID-19, they should still follow the Stay at Home guidance, which states that they must continue to self-isolate for at least 10 days from the onset of their symptoms, and then return to school only if they do not have symptoms other than cough or loss of smell/taste. Other members of the household should continue isolating for the full 14 days. It is extremely important that those who have been advised to self-isolate do so to prevent further transmission of Covid-19.

### **Q. What happens if I or another family member falls ill. Should my child attend school?**

Anyone who develops symptoms of COVID-19, or whose household member develops symptoms, should immediately self-isolate. They should not attend school. If a test on the member displaying COVID 19 symptoms is negative, then your child will be able to return to school.

### **Q. What happens if another child in my child's bubble falls ill?**

If a child who attends or staff member who works at a school tests positive for COVID-19 then schools, supported by contact tracers where appropriate, will undertake contact tracing to identify direct and close contacts of the case during the 48 hours prior to the child or staff member falling ill. This depends on each individual case but may be the classmates and teacher of that class. In some circumstances your child may be sent home for a short time as a precautionary measure whilst contact tracing is carried out.

Schools have put in place a range of social distancing measure in their settings, and this should help to ensure the number of children who are asked to isolate as a result of a confirmed case is minimised.

If your child is identified as a direct or close contact, they will be asked to stay away from the school/setting and advised to self-isolate for 14 days starting from the day they were last in contact with the case.

Anyone else in your child's household does not need to self-isolate unless your child develops symptoms. Your child does not need testing for COVID-19 unless they develop symptoms.

### **Q. How is the NHS COVID-19 app used in schools?**

The app is available to anyone aged 16 or over to download if they choose. This will mean that some students in year 11, and the majority of students in years 12 and above will be eligible to use the app and benefit from its features. Staff members will also be able to use the app.

Where mobile phones are allowed on the premises, your child's school may have a policy on how they are using the NHS COVID-19 app based on guidance. The general guidance is that settings advise or require students and staff to pause contact tracing

whilst on the premises where mobile phones are required to be left in lockers or bags in communal areas at all time, to avoid the app misidentifying close contacts. When someone switches it off, the app will give the user the option to set a reminder for 4, 8 or 12 hours, after which they will receive a notification to remind them to switch contact tracing back on.