

To: All Headteachers

Ealing Council
Perceval House
14-16 Uxbridge Road
London W5 2HL

Tel 020 8825 5000

14th September 2020

Dear Colleagues

September Opening Update

Welcome back to the new school year. I know it will have been an exceptionally busy and challenging few weeks for you all, it certainly has been for us too. I just wanted to give you an update on the position in Ealing and ask you continue to reinforce the key public health messages to your school community and staff.

Daily attendance

On a positive note, the percentage of children attending schools on Thursday last week, where all year groups are open, was 87 per cent and 88 per cent respective for primary and high schools. The rates of attendance for those with EHCPs and with social workers were lower at 80 per cent. I know that you will do everything you can to increase the attendance rate. Do contact your school attendance officer if you need further support on specific cases. For those children with EHCPs, where parents are not sending children to school, despite your best efforts, either contact the child's social worker if known to the Children with Disabilities Team (CWD) or their EHC Co-ordinator.

The daily attendance returns help us in keeping members and key stakeholders engaged and provides useful information on where we may need to target help and support to schools and communities. I appreciate that this is extra work for schools but the vast majority, 85 per cent of schools, are making daily returns to the DfE. Could I ask that you do submit these returns daily by midday so that we have a full a picture as possible?

Informing the LA of confirmed cases

A 'confirmed case' of coronavirus is someone who has tested positive. Please follow the [flowchart](#) on EGFL. In all confirmed cases, could schools not only contact the Local Health Protection Team – the London Coronavirus Response Cell (LCRC)– but also inform the LA ([Raj Chowdhury](#) or [Stephen Dunham](#) and email publichealth@ealing.gov.uk). These are the only contacts you need to advise in the Council. They will deal with distributing information and engaging with other parts of the Council as necessary.

We know that the LCRC has been inundated with calls across London since the start of term. If the team knows about the cases, we can seek to escalate these if necessary where the response is slow and offer advice.

Confirmed single cases, outbreaks and clusters

We have agreed with Headteacher representatives to provide them each Friday on the latest position on confirmed cases in schools and the measures that have been put in place. Heads' representatives considered that this would help manage speculation. The update will include a glossary of terms so that we are clearly communicating the nature of the situation in a school as it is important that the messages are clear and communicated carefully.

Face Coverings in congested areas for parents

We know that drop off and pick up times can be a challenge for some schools. We have advised schools to consider strongly advising parents to wear face coverings as an additional protective measure where social distancing is difficult to maintain. A number of schools have adopted this approach already. We will promote this message through social media. If you think there is anything else we could do to support you, do get in contact through your quadrant or high/special school representative. For specific advice on managing congestion in and around the site contact Steve or Raj.

Open evenings

Our advice is that these should be virtual, and schools use other media as well to get key messages across to parents. In very exceptional circumstances there may be a need for some pupils to visit. We advise that this should be pre-booked for an individual pupil and a parent. Of course, a risk assessment for the activity should be undertaken and control measures put in place. Could you please confirm to the Admissions Team what your arrangements are so that we are able to advise parents if we receive a query.

We are concerned about the potential for "no choice" offers to increase. To assist us, could I ask that you continue to remind parents about the importance of understanding school admission criteria and to read the data in the on-line brochure of the furthest distance offer made (where distance is a criterion). The admissions team will also continue to promote these points.

Testing

Schools have been issued with [guidance on testing](#) and the advice for parents and teachers. It is very important that this guidance is followed. The latest advice on who is entitled to be tested is <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-getting-tested#who-can-be-tested>.

There is currently a national issue around testing capacity which the government is working to resolve. Only those with symptoms or those advised by their clinician or Local Authority should get a test. Schools must not require students to provide evidence of a negative test before letting them back to school.

Testing Kits for schools

All schools should have received an initial allocation of 10 testing kits at the beginning of term. If you have not, please contact 119 helpline. These kits are to be used only where staff, parents and children are unable to access tests through other routes. From 16th September a portal will be open for schools to order additional test kits if they have run out or if schools are running out of test kits, via this link:

<https://request-testing.test-for-coronavirus.service.gov.uk>.

Kits will be supplied in boxes of 10. You will be able to make a new order for coronavirus test kits 21 days after you receive a delivery confirmation email telling you the kits have been sent. Schools will need a Unique Organisation Number (UON) to place orders for test kits. You will receive your UON by email on or before 16 September. After this date, please call the Test and Trace helpdesk on 119 if you have not received your UON.

Testing Facilities in the Borough

A testing centre is now open in Southall at Featherstone Road Car Park. It is strongly advised that people pre-book a testing slot on-line or through 119 as there is currently a cap on tests. There may be limited walk-in capacity depending on the pre-booked demand for each day. The facility is open 7 days a week from 8am to 8pm. Another centre in Acton, at the Michael Flanders site, is due to open at the beginning of October. The location of a third site is being investigated. We will provide you with updates during this term.

Position in Ealing: Key messages

The Council publishes a weekly update on the latest information comparing the rates in Ealing with other areas and this is available [here](#). As you know infection rates are rising nationally, across London and in Ealing too. This is not unexpected as testing capacity increases and the economy opens up.

Getting and keeping children in school this year is our key priority. I am sure you appreciate that it is essential that we all continue to communicate key messages set out below to **staff, parents and your school community**.

- If your child, or anyone in your household, develops symptoms of Covid-19 (a fever, a new consistent cough or a loss or change in taste or smell), or is identified as a contact of someone who has tested positive for Covid-19, **do not send your child to school**. [Stay at home](#) and arrange for anyone who has symptoms of Covid-19 to get a test by visiting [NHS Coronavirus](#) or by calling 119. Please refer to the [flowchart for parents](#).
- Wash your hands frequently and thoroughly for at least 20 seconds using soap and water or alcohol-based hand sanitiser
- Wear a [cloth face covering](#) on public transport and shops and crowded indoor settings
- [Keep your distance](#) from people who are outside your household or support bubble, limited social gatherings and avoid crowded places

We want to continue to build on the effective and successful working relationships we have with colleagues and we are meeting representatives of Heads on the Schools Consultative Group/ ELP Board fortnightly. If you do have concerns that affect schools in your area or sector, please do raise these through your representatives.

Best wishes

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Judith Finlay".

Judith Finlay
Executive Director
Children's, Adults and Public Health

Tel 020 8825 5426
email finlayj@ealing.gov.uk