

Tuesday 30 November 2021

Dear parents and carers

COVID-19 update for schools and colleges

It's been an extremely tough term for teachers, pupils and parents and it's not over yet. COVID-19 rates in school aged children in the borough are extremely high and increasing. In primary aged children the case rate is currently almost 1,500 cases per 100,000, which is the highest it's ever been. In secondary aged children case rates remain consistently above 1,000 cases per 100,000.

We understand that it can be confusing when you are asked to follow rules in school that may appear to differ from the rules in wider society. However, schools, like other settings such as care homes and health settings, have specific guidance they must follow to minimise risks.

We also know that there are many viruses doing the rounds now, with symptoms that are like those of COVID-19. It can be frustrating to be asked to keep your child at home and arrange a COVID-19 test if you believe they just have a winter cold (even if they have a temperature or cough). However, the only way to know this for sure is for your child to take a PCR test. With self-isolation of close contacts no longer required, and the COVID-19 rates in our schools two or three times higher than the general population in the borough, it is more important than ever to identify all positive cases to reduce the risk of transmission in school.

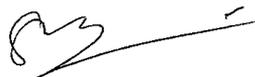
Please be assured that schools are not making these decisions or requests lightly, or in isolation. There is regular liaison between schools, the local authority and the UK Health Security Health Protection Team (formerly PHE). As a local authority we fully support all action that schools are taking in the interest of keeping their staff and your children safe.

We hope that by working together we can all enjoy the festivities of the last few weeks of term safely and then take a well-deserved break whilst remaining healthy. So please do follow the advice and guidance of your child's school. We do understand that it's not easy or fun, but it is the right thing to do to protect everyone's Christmas.

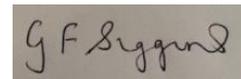
Yours sincerely



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