

September 28th, 2020

Dear Parents, and Guardians,

This September returning to school has been more challenging than ever. We are very pleased to have welcomed children and young people in the borough back to their schools. We know how important it has been for children and young people to return to face to face teaching with their teachers. We have developed a range of resources to help you all at www.barnet.gov.uk/backtoschool.

We would like to reassure parents that the evidence indicates that it is safe for schools to open. Our schools have worked hard to develop risk assessments and the council has supported schools to review these and implement changes to make schools safer. It is important to note that of the more than 1 million children attending pre-school and primary school in England in June this year, just 70 children were infected with COVID-19. Public Health England concluded the children were more likely to acquire COVID-19 infection outside school settings than in schools.

This highlights the importance of observing social distancing outside school premises, so our children and young people can continue their education fully. We have seen a recent increase in cases of COVID in young people (particularly 16 to 17 years olds), in line with the national picture, which shows that COVID has not gone away. It is vitally important that everyone (including parents, children, and young people) follows the government guidance on social distancing at all times (available [here](#)).

As guidelines are complex and have changed recently, please refresh yourself with up to date recommendations on social distancing. Below are some key points:

1. When meeting people you must socially distance from everyone except people in your household (the people you live with), someone you are in an established relationship with, or anyone in your legally-permitted support bubble (if you are in one).
2. When meeting friends and family you do not live with (or have formed a support bubble with) it is against the law to meet in a group of more than 6, indoors or outdoors (There are a few limited exceptions outlined [here](#)).
3. Avoid travelling in private cars with people not from your own household and follow government guidance on safe travel during COVID (available [here](#)).
4. Wear a face covering in shops, on public transport or other public buildings. See [here](#) for a list of places where a face covering is required.
5. Face coverings should be worn by children aged 11 and over on public transport and in some schools in corridors. Barnet Council have issued all state secondary school pupils with a washable face covering.
6. Engage fully with NHS Test and Trace if they contact you, to help prevent the spread of COVID-19 and save lives.

It is important to remember that COVID has not gone away. To protect everyone, outside of school, children and young people must follow the government's general social distancing guidance outlined above, even when they are meeting their classmates.

Whilst at school children may be in larger class groups, this is because schools have specific COVID secure safety measure in place to minimise the risk of transmission. Inside schools (and COVID-secure after school clubs/childcare) children and young people must follow the COVID secure measures the schools and venues have in place, and children who are old enough should still socially distance as much as possible. The government have

created a document outlining what parents and carers need to know about early years providers and schools in the autumn term (available [here](#)).

As well as socially distancing, to protect our families and communities it is also **vitaly important that people self-isolate when they need to.**

The 3 main symptoms of COVID-19 are:

- **a high temperature** – this means you feel hot to touch on your chest or back (you do not need to measure your temperature)
- **a new, continuous cough** – this means coughing a lot for more than an hour, or 3 or more coughing episodes in 24 hours (if you usually have a cough, it may be worse than usual)
- **a loss or change to your sense of smell or taste** – this means you've noticed you cannot smell or taste anything, or things smell or taste different to normal

Anyone with any of these symptoms of COVID-19 (or a positive test) or who lives in a household/support bubble with anyone with symptoms of COVID-19 (or a positive test) must not attend school or work and must follow the government's advice on self-isolation (available [here](#)). Anyone who has been advised by their school or college to self-isolate, or has been contacted by NHS Test and Trace and advised to self-isolate, must also self-isolate as advised.

If you do not self-isolate when you need to do so you may be fined. If you are advised by your school that you child has symptoms of COVID-19 you must collect them from school and your entire household must self-isolate immediately in accordance with government guidance (available [here](#)).

If you are required to stay at home and self-isolate, you may be entitled to a one-off payment of £500 through the Test and Trace Support Payment scheme (see [here](#) for further details). If you are unable to work due to COVID-19, please also refer to this [guidance from the Department for Work and Pensions](#) to find out about the support that is available to you. If you are a Barnet resident and are unable to access essential supplies whilst self-isolating please contact the Barnet Community Hub on 0808 281 3210. Further guidance on accessing food and essential supplies whilst self-isolating is available at [here](#).

Anyone with symptoms of COVID-19 should obtain a COVID-19 test as soon as possible. Tests can be booked either via the online portal (accessible [here](#)) or by dialing 119. Make sure you notify your school immediately if you or your child have a positive test.


If you/your children are asked to self-isolate or quarantine after foreign travel, you have to complete the advised self-isolation period, even if you test negative during this time. This means staying at home and following the government guidance available [here](#).

If there is case positive case of COVID-19 in your child's school the London Coronavirus Response Cell or other health protection specialists will liaise with your school and will advise who, in the school, needs to self-isolate for 14 days. These will be pupils or staff who have been in close contact with the child or adult who tested positive. This may be a small group of pupils or a whole class or year group. If your child is instructed to self-isolate it is vital that this instruction is followed. This not only means not going to school, it also means not attending community groups, meeting up with friends etc.

If you are self-isolating you can seek medical advice by calling 111 or calling your GP. For anyone aged 5 or over you can also use the 111 online COVID-19 service (<https://111.nhs.uk/covid-19/>). In an emergency you should call 999. Further information about COVID-19 symptoms in children and when to seek medical help can be found at www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/symptoms/coronavirus-in-children/

We can combat Covid-19 by working together to keep ourselves, our family and friends, and Barnet safe. We would like to thank you for your help and co-operation.

Kind regards,



Dr Tamara Djuretic, Director of Public Health, London Borough of Barnet.