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Parent / Carer

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## **Coronavirus (Covid-19) – Full opening of schools**

I hope you and your family are safe and well at this difficult time.

Thank you for your continued support to the national response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Many of you will have faced significant challenges during this unprecedented and worrying time. You may have had to go out to work, leaving your child(ren) in school, or been at home with your child(ren), supporting their continued learning alongside your own work.

I am also incredibly grateful for the work of our head teachers and school staff, many of whom have worked non-stop since the start of the pandemic, initially remaining open for vulnerable children and children of key workers, and last month opening to a larger number of children in priority year groups. This action has helped reducing transmission of COVID-19, to protect the NHS and save lives.

The circumstances have now changed, the prevalence of COVID-19 has decreased, the NHS Test and Trace system is up and running, and the benefits of being back in school far outweigh the very low risk from COVID-19.

Many of you will have heard the Prime Minister setting out the government's plan that all pupils, in all year groups, will return to school full-time from the beginning of the autumn term. It is vital for all children to return to school to help minimise the longer-term impact of the pandemic on their education, wellbeing and wider development.

The government have confirmed that school attendance will therefore be mandatory again from the beginning of the autumn term, and pupils of compulsory school age must be in school unless a statutory reason applies. This means that the usual rules on school attendance will again apply, including the powers to impose sanctions and fixed penalty notices. A small number of pupils will still be unable to attend in line with public health advice because they are self-isolating and have had symptoms or a positive test result themselves, because they are a close contact of someone who has COVID-19, or are following clinical advice.

The position has improved, but COVID-19 remains in the community, and on-going developments mean that the situation could change at any time. Each school will be working hard to minimise any risks, but this means you have an active role in reducing the risk of transmitting the virus.

There will be noticeable differences in the way different schools implement some of the measures based on their individual circumstances. Schools will be thoroughly reviewing their health and safety risk assessments and drawing up plans for the autumn term that address the risks identified. Essential measures will include:

- minimise contact with individuals who are unwell by ensuring that those who have COVID-19 symptoms, or who have someone in their household who does, do not attend school
- clean hands thoroughly and more often than usual
- ensure good respiratory hygiene - the 'catch it, bin it, kill it' approach
- introduce enhanced cleaning, including cleaning frequently touched surfaces often
- minimise contact between individuals and maintain social distancing wherever possible to reduce the risk of transmission
- where necessary and in specific circumstances, wear appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE)
- active engagement with NHS Test and Trace

Schools may implement staggered starts, or adjust start and finish times to keep groups apart as they arrive and leave school. Parents will need to strictly adhere to any new process that has been agreed for drop off and collection. Pupils should also be encouraged to walk or cycle to school, if possible, and should also limit the amount of equipment they bring into school each day, to essentials such as lunch boxes, hats, coats, books, and stationery.

It is essential that pupils do not come into the school if they have COVID-19 symptoms, or have tested positive in the last 7 days. Anyone developing COVID-19 symptoms during the school day will be sent home to self-isolate for at least 7 days, and should arrange to have a test to see if they have COVID-19. Other members of their household (including any siblings) should self-isolate for 14 days from when the symptomatic person first had symptoms.

We have all welcomed the easing of the lockdown restrictions, but we must remain careful. We need to follow the government's advice to reduce the risk of a spike in COVID-19 infections locally. A local outbreak may result in full/partial school closures at short notice, but the safety of everyone in the school community is the most important thing for us. We want to get all pupils back into school as soon as it is safe to do so because school is the best learning environment for our children.

Havering Council will be issuing regular communications over the summer period to keep you updated, but you can find more information in the attached government guidance:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/what-parents-and-carers-need-to-know-about-early-years-providers-schools-and-colleges-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-outbreak>

I assure you that Havering Council is working closely with all our schools to offer a consistent and safe response, and the health and safety of children, their families and staff remains everyone's first priority during this period.

Thank you for your continued co-operation at this time.

Kind regards,



**Cllr Robert Benham**  
Deputy Leader of the Council  
Cabinet Member for Education, Children & Families