



Friday 5th March 2021

Dear Parents, Guardians, Carers, Children and Young People,

Today marks a very special day, and one that we have been waiting a long time to come – the last day of the lockdown restrictions for schools, and the start of the return of all children and young people to face-to-face teaching from Monday 8th March.

You will have already been contacted by your child(ren)'s school to set out how the return for all children and young people will work next week. Each school has needed to address this return in a way that reflects their unique context, their pupils, staff, families and the needs of their school environment; and so I'm not going to set out here what is happening across the Trust.

Instead, I wanted to write today to ask for your continued support for your schools and school staff as they navigate the next few weeks to ensure the safe return of all children and young people to our schools in a Covid-safe environment; and to share some updated guidance with you all.

Rapid Lateral Flow Tests

You may have seen in the media that the Department for Education has [announced](#) that rapid lateral flow tests will be made available to families and bubbles of school pupils and staff as schools reopen

Information about Covid-19 tests available to households with children of school age can be found [here](#). Rapid test kits will be available to collect from more than 500 locations, or through workplace testing and local community testing services. The updated guidance from yesterday clarifies that from 1 March 2021, if you're a member of a household, childcare bubble or support bubble of staff or a pupil you can get a twice-weekly test:

- through your employer if they offer testing to employees
- at a local test site
- by collecting a home test kit from a test site
- by ordering a home test kit online

The Government has confirmed that primary school children will **not** be regularly asymptotically tested due to low levels of transmission between younger aged children but will continue to need to come forward for tests if they have symptoms.

You can find out about [childcare bubbles](#) and [support bubbles](#) at these links. The Government has also published information about [what rapid lateral flow testing is and why it's being used](#).

Home testing is voluntary, and is not required by the Trust; however, we wanted to ensure that you all had access to the information of the availability of the home-test kits which can be used as an additional precaution both for the protection of those at home, and those at school.

#BackToSchool Campaign

On Saturday the DfE launched a national campaign ahead of Monday's return to school. The Secretary of State has also written an [open letter](#) to parents to set out the Government's perspective on the return to school. The #BacktoSchool campaign highlights the importance of face-to-face education for pupils' social and emotional development as well as their academic success – both of which are issues parents say they worry about with their children learning remotely. The campaign also highlights the testing available to primary and secondary settings and sets out the extra protective measures in place in schools and colleges.

Whilst we are really looking forward to the return of the children and young people next week, we all understand that for some families there will be worries and concerns about the return to school. And whilst I can offer reassurance that all of the schools have created really good and focused risk assessments to create Covid-safe learning environments and a creative curriculum that will nurture and support each pupil as they return to school; we also understand that for some families there may remain significant and appropriate concerns about school from Monday.

If you have any concerns, please may I urge you to contact your child(ren)'s school to talk to staff and school leaders about your concerns in order that we can support you and your children in taking the appropriate steps to the return to school. Thank you.

There will be a lot of mixed emotions on Monday, and over the forthcoming days and weeks as we navigate our way through this next phase of the roadmap out of lockdown. I wanted to take this opportunity again to thank you for all that you have done and been doing to support our schools in their work, and for your continued support as we move into this new phase of our work.

We will continue to keep you up to date with changes in the guidance over the forthcoming weeks, and look forward to hopefully, being able to meet with you in person at some stage this academic year.

I hope that you have an enjoyable weekend, and a successful start to next week. Stay safe and well.

With kind regards,

Jez Piper

CEO

Diocese of Bristol Academies Trust