

# Children returning to school

Information for parents and carers



This leaflet was produced by Achieving for Children in partnership with the Public Health Teams in Kingston and Richmond

Public Health are keeping this guidance under constant review

# Should I be sending my child to school?

We are looking forward to welcoming all children and young people back to school in September 2020. School attendance is important to help children learn and develop their emotional and social skills. The health and safety of children, teaching staff and their families remains our top priority. Every school has worked hard to put in place safety measures to help protect children, staff and families and reduce the spread of the COVID-19 virus (Coronavirus) as more children return to school. Every school has completed detailed risk assessments and has used these to prepare their plans for the new term in September.

It is understandable that some people are worried about COVID-19. We must all do our best to prevent its spread and we will work with you and throughout our school community to do this.

If you are concerned about the risk for anyone in your family, and whether or not your child should return to school, you should talk through your concerns with your GP or school. You can also discuss these with the School Health Team in your borough:

Kingston: [www.yourhealthcare.org/services/school-health](http://www.yourhealthcare.org/services/school-health)

Richmond: [www.healthmatters.clch.nhs.uk](http://www.healthmatters.clch.nhs.uk)

# What steps will schools take to keep children safe?

As schools welcomed more children back across the summer term, they worked hard to make their buildings safe, staggering start and finish times and reducing contact for children, families and staff. This worked very well and we are building on these systems and plans for the start of the new term in September.

All schools have been asked to follow detailed national advice on how to make schools as safe as possible for children.

This includes:

- minimising the number of contacts children have in schools
- requiring people who are ill to stay at home
- following hand washing guidance and using tissues appropriately
- putting in place enhanced cleaning arrangements
- actively engaging with NHS Test and Trace
- physical distancing wherever possible



# School in September

There is an expectation that all children and young people come back to school in September. Attendance will no longer be optional. This means from that point, the usual rules on school attendance will apply.

- **Parents have a duty to ensure that their child regularly attends the school where they are a registered pupil if they are of compulsory school age.**
- **Schools have a responsibility to record pupil attendance and follow up absence.**
- **The local authority may issue sanctions, including fixed penalty notices, for persistent school absence in line with its code of conduct.**

We know being absent from school can have a detrimental impact often leading to further long-term attendance issues. Missing out on more time in the classroom risks pupils falling further behind in their education.

Whilst the majority of our children will be excited about the prospect of returning to school, there will be some who are anxious. If you or your child have concerns, the best thing to do is to call the school and talk things through. They will be keen to support your child and help their return.

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, or because they are a close contact of someone who has Coronavirus (COVID-19). If your child is unable to attend school for this reason, you should talk to your school about what support is in place in terms of remote education. Where children are not able to attend school as parents are following clinical and/or Public Health advice, the absence will not be penalised.

# What happens if someone has symptoms of COVID-19?

Reducing the risk of a local outbreak is essential and everyone's responsibility. Schools will be following strict guidance and it's important that we all support them.

**Do not come to school if your child or anyone in the household has symptoms.** If your child or anyone in your household has any of the following symptoms while not at school please let your school know, and keep your child and the rest of your household at home:

- a high temperature
- a new, continuous cough
- a change to your sense of taste or smell

**Get tested.** Anyone with symptoms needs to self-isolate along with all of their household and get tested as soon as possible. Your child should also be tested. Call 119 or book the **free** test through [www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19).

If a child or member of staff gets these symptoms in school, they will be sent home with advice about what to do.

If the test is negative, and the person no longer has symptoms, the child and their household can leave self-isolation and return to school.

If a child or member of staff tests positive, then their class group will be sent home to self-isolate for 14 days. The household's other children do not need to isolate, unless they (or other household members) also develop symptoms.

# What can I do to keep everyone safe?

Check everyone at home is well before your child goes to school and stay at home if anyone has symptoms of COVID-19.

If your child has any of the following symptoms, stay home and get tested: a high temperature, a new, continuous cough, a change to your sense of taste or smell. Book a free test by calling 119 or going online: [www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19)

## Travelling to school

The safest and healthiest way to travel to school is outdoors: on foot, by bike or scooter.

Some schools may need to stagger or adjust start and finish times as this helps keep groups apart on the way to and from school, and as they arrive and leave. Your school will be in touch to set out any changes it is making. This might also include new processes for drop off and collection.

## Social distancing outside school

Only one parent or carer should take your child to school. Please do not stay and chat at the school gates.

If your child has to travel on public transport, encourage them to be alert and follow social distancing rules. Children over 11 years should wear face coverings on public transport and in other public spaces where social distancing is difficult.

## Hygiene

Handwashing is vital. Wash hands regularly for 20 seconds, with soap and running water, especially before and after school, before and after eating, and after using a tissue or the toilet.

# Welcome back!

Schools will do everything they can to keep children safe and happy.

Some children may feel anxious and take a little time to readjust to their school routine, but teachers will spend the first few weeks of the new term helping children and young people to settle back into school and classroom learning, especially those who are starting school or moving to a new school.

We hope that most children will adapt quickly and well to being back in school, but schools will be able to provide support to those who need more help.



## **Iona Lidington, Director of Kingston Public Health**

“Welcome back to school. I hope you find the information in this booklet helpful. Please play your part by following the advice and help to keep Kingston safe.”

## **Shannon Katiyo, Director of Richmond Public Health**

“Education and health are closely linked and both are really important for the full development of our children and young people. I look forward to welcoming them all back to school while we all do our part to keep Richmond safe.”

## **Ian Dodds, Director of Children’s Services, Kingston and Richmond**

“I’m really pleased to be welcoming children and young people back to school and back to learning in classrooms with their teachers and alongside their friends. Many children will be itching to get back, while others will be more cautious or even worried. I understand that some parents will have mixed feelings too.

It is important, though, that children return to the routine of school - not only to learn, but also for the emotional support that school provides. Over the past few weeks, schools have been working hard to ensure that they are safe places and have reliable systems in place to reduce the risks of COVID-19. I know they will do all that they can to help children and young people safely settle back into school and I know that, as parents or carers, you’ll play your part in achieving that too.”