

Date:

13th July 2021

Dear Parents and Carers,

Step 4 of the COVID-19 Roadmap in England

As we approach the end of another academic year that has been significantly challenging for us all, we wanted to take this opportunity to extend our sincere thanks to you all for all you have done during the pandemic to support your child and their school/setting during this time. We have and continue to be grateful for your ongoing resilience, cooperation and understanding through such turbulent and uncertain times.

Over the last year we have seen our pupils in and out of their education setting due to bubble closures and the need to isolate. Many of you have and continue to support your children to work remotely during periods of isolation and we know that whilst for some this has been a good experience, for many, this has been a real challenge and has caused uncertainty, disruption and has impacted on both adult and children and young people's health and wellbeing. It has been wonderful to see through social media, some of the fabulous and creative ways our children have been learning remotely and in their classes.

We would also like to say a massive thank you to the headteachers and all the staff in our schools who have worked tirelessly to keep our schools open and as safe as possible and to support children whether in school or at home learning remotely. Many have worked over the holidays and often weekends and evenings to ensure that the work is ready for the children and that the schools are COVID-safe.

You will be aware that new guidance for schools has now been issued by central government to describe what the next steps are when we reach the 19th July and then again from the 16th August when particular groups will no longer be required to isolate. As Wigan's Director of Public Health and the Borough's Chief Medical Officer, I wanted to briefly set these out for you and explain why we may have advised measures that are different to those advised in the Guidance.

Arrangements from 19th July

As the Government moves the Country to Step 4 of the COVID-19 Roadmap, this means that further restrictions are to be lifted and members of the public are expected to take more personal responsibility for their actions.

However, as many children in Wigan will still be in school on July 19th, and as we remain an enhanced response area (ERA), I have advised schools and settings not to relax restrictions on July 19th, but instead to introduce these new measures at the start of the new term in September.

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Our schools will continue to operate under their current risk assessment and related health and safety procedures for the last few days of the Summer Term. This means, for example, that children will still be taught in designated bubbles, social distancing rules will be maintained, and schools will still ask children to wear face coverings where required.

Schools in Wigan have also been advised that local Public Health advice remains the same in relation to a range of school events, including Proms, overnight residentials, transition days, and sports days. Attendance continues to be mandatory and therefore pupils should be attending school during term time. When planning holidays please remember that any self-isolation after the holiday should also fall within the school holidays.

We regret that we have had to make these recommendations to schools, however the high rates of COVID-19 within the borough leave us with no other option. For further information about the rates of COVID-19 in Wigan, please visit: <https://www.wigan.gov.uk/Docs/PDF/Resident/Crime-Emergencies/COVID19-Weekly-Tracker.pdf>.

Arrangements for the Summer Break

Over the summer, we will continue to support schools with COVID-19 testing for staff and for older students, either on site or at home where appropriate, and we will continue to support them to identify children who need to isolate as a result of either having COVID-19, or from being a contact of another child or adult who has tested positive. To obtain home testing kits over the summer, please visit this link: <https://www.wigan.gov.uk/Resident/Crime-Emergencies/Coronavirus/Request-a-Covid-19-test-without-symptoms.aspx>. Booking is not required, and you will be provided with 2 boxes (containing 7 tests each) per person. It is recommended that people undertake 2 tests per week to help to reduce the transmission of COVID-19. Please ensure that results are uploaded onto the national portal as per the instructions inside the kit. Enquiries can be emailed to C19Testing@wigan.gov.uk.

Children attending summer schools/clubs may be required to take lateral flow tests depending on their age. Y6 pupils attending their new secondary school summer activities may be asked to take part in testing. If they are a close contact with a positive case, they will still be required to isolate until the new rules come in on the 16th August.

We hope that you will support us in our Public Health work to help keep everyone safe. By far the best form of protection against COVID-19 is to be fully vaccinated and if you have not yet done this, you can find clinic dates and book an appointment as soon as possible via the NHS Portal at: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/coronavirus-vaccination/book-coronavirus-vaccination>. Appointments can also be booked by calling 01942 807780.

Everyone aged 18 years and over are eligible, and those aged 16-17 years who are carers or have a health condition. There are also a number of walk-in vaccination clinics across Wigan where you do not need to book: [Walk-in Vaccine Clinics - Healthier Wigan Partnership](#)

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Where possible, you should continue to maintain social distancing, minimise contacts especially in crowded spaces, continue to wear a face covering in shops and other public places, and practice good hygiene measures including regular hand washing. If your child is unwell, they should stay at home as there are a number of other viruses also circulating.

Arrangements for September

As the guidance currently states, we are hoping our schools will return to some form of normality in September. This includes, amongst other things, the lifting of bubbles and not wearing face coverings. However, in certain circumstances such as a local outbreak, measures may be reintroduced. Further information for parents and carers is available at:

<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/step-4-update-what-parents-and-carers-need-to-know-about-early-years-providers-schools-and-colleges>

On return to school in September, all secondary school pupils will be asked to undertake two on-site lateral flow tests, three to five days apart. It is recognised that specialist settings will have additional considerations to take into account when delivering asymptomatic testing and additional guidance on testing in specialist settings has been published: [Rapid asymptomatic testing in specialist settings \(applies until Step 4\) - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

You may find when your children return to school that some of the changes will remain in place. This is because schools have found that some of the measures have improved the systems used and have proven to be beneficial. Please do remember that all school situations are different and what happens in one school will not necessarily be the same in another school. Please do respect the systems that your school has in place. All schools will be reviewing their risk assessments for the new school year to ensure that all the children, young people, staff and visitors, including parents and carers, remain safe.

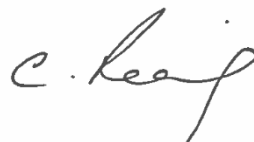
Should you have any questions about the information in this letter, please contact your school in the first instance.

It just remains for us to wish you all a very happy and safe summer holiday.

Yours sincerely,



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