

London Borough of Tower Hamlets
www.towerhamlets.gov.uk

Friday 17 July 2020

Dear Parents and Carers

RE: Coronavirus (Covid-19) information for parents and carers – return to school in September 2020

We are looking forward to a return to school for every child in Tower Hamlets in the new academic year, starting in September.

In this letter we will outline the measures we have introduced to manage the risk of Covid-19 and ensure any return to school is done in the safest way possible.

For children the benefits of going back to school greatly outweigh the risk posed by Covid-19.

Going to school is an essential part of a child's social, emotional and academic development that impacts positively on their general wellbeing and life chances.

That is why every child going back to school in September will be required by law.

Our schools are experts at managing risk and have made lots of changes to protect staff, children and their families.

If you have any concerns, please speak directly to your school or call our Family Information Service on 020 7364 6495 (Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm). If you have questions of a medical nature, you should contact 111 or your GP.

We appreciate it may have been, and still be, a difficult time for families and children in our borough – thank you for your continued cooperation.

Don't forget, there are over 200 free activities for families in Tower Hamlets to enjoy this Summer. Visit www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/summerevents to learn more.

Visit <https://www.london.gov.uk/coronavirus/covid-19-resources-and-services-your-language> for information and advice in a range of languages.

Yours sincerely,



James Thomas
Corporate Director, Children and Culture



Dr Somen Banerjee
Director of Public Health



Further information for parents and carers

Why were schools closed?

In late March, Covid-19 infections were increasing faster than anticipated. The government then announced that the public health benefits of keeping schools open had shifted and the scientific advice was that schools should close to slow the spread of the virus.

Why are they now reopening?

Many schools in Tower Hamlets remained open for vulnerable children and children of key workers during lockdown. More schools have been reopening in phases since June, as the spread of the virus slowed down and now the number of people with the infection is low.

What measures are in place to manage the risk at my child's school?

Your school may do several things, including:

- Introducing a one-way system
- Marking the floor to support social distancing
- Increased signage to support hygiene measure (e.g. washing hands, covering your mouth when you sneeze)
- Creating 'bubbles' or groups of children and teachers by class, or year group
- Having different start and finish times, break times and mealtimes throughout the day to manage the flow of children through the school

What is the risk to my child(ren) from Covid-19?

Children appear to have a milder course of infection than adults. Most children have mild or no symptoms. Deaths in children due to Covid-19 are extremely rare.

What is the risk to my family if my child catches Covid-19 in school?

Covid-19 infections in Tower Hamlets are now low, so the chances of your child catching it at school are also low. Schools are taking lots of steps to stop the virus spreading. The NHS Test and Trace service aims to find infections and stop them spreading through communities.

New research suggests children may be less likely to catch Covid-19. Most research shows that children are unlikely to pass on infections in schools.

Washing children's hands when they leave school and arrive home can reduce risk further.



What happens if someone at the school gets Covid-19?

The family and the school will be contacted by Public Health England. They will give advice to close contacts and will support the school to stop the virus spreading to other people. The school will let parents know and will say what they are doing to protect the community.

What happens if my child gets Covid-19?

If your child is in school and displays symptoms, they will be immediately sent home for at least seven days. Siblings and other household members will need to isolate with them for at least 14 days. If anyone has symptoms, they should not go to school and you should arrange for them to be tested.

What happens if someone in my family gets Covid-19?

Anyone who has tested positive with Covid-19 should isolate for seven days. Anyone in their household should isolate for at least 14 days. They need to tell NHS contact tracers that their children attend a school or childcare setting.

Will I be fined if I do not send my child to school in September?

Yes, you could be. Attendance will be mandatory from September, making it a legal requirement to send your child to their school.

How will I know if I need to get a test?

Anyone with a new continuous cough, fever or a change or loss in their sense of taste or smell should get tested.

How do I get a test?

Call 119 or visit 111.nhs.uk/covid-19

For children under five, call 111 or visit 111.nhs.uk for more advice.

How can I reduce risk if infection on the journey to or from school?

Where possible, walk or cycle to your school and avoid public transport. Visit <https://tfl.gov.uk/reopeningeducation> for more information on active travel choices.

Will my child need to wear a face mask at school?

No. They are not recommended by Public Health England.

[ENDS]

