

4th March 2021

Dear pupils, parents and carers,

Return to school for Lambeth children

Schools are looking forward to welcoming more pupils back when they begin full re-opening on 8th March.

Thank you for supporting home learning which we know has been challenging for many. We are also very grateful to schools for remaining open for vulnerable pupils and key worker children.

Many children have learnt how to work independently and use IT better - great life skills, but now is the time to restore the fun and social interaction that comes from being together in school.

We now need your help to prepare your child for returning to school.

During these significant changes, we all want to support our children to share a sense of normality returning. Being part of the real school community, meeting friends in person, enjoying lessons in a classroom, having social time, playing sports and being together cannot be replicated at home. For this reason, the **Government have reintroduced compulsory attendance** and we as a council will be working hard with you and our schools to ensure all children can attend school as soon as possible.

Please visit your school's website to see what arrangements are being made for 8th March. Secondary schools will decide a phased approach, if necessary, during the first week back so please check when your child is expected to attend. Most schools will have staggered starts and finishes.

We understand that some families will be worried, and **we would encourage you to discuss these concerns with your child's school.** All schools will have measures to reduce the risk of Covid-19 infection. In addition to working in 'bubble groups' and keeping social distance where possible, all schools will have **weekly testing of staff. Secondary schools will be carrying out testing of students during the first week and after the first three tests in school, pupils will be able to test at home.** There will be a wider use of **face coverings**, particularly in secondary schools. **Please discuss these measures with your child so they understand and follow reasonable instructions.**

Although participating in testing is voluntary, it is a vital part of the measures to detect and control the spread of Covid-19. We are actively encouraging everyone to take part so that we can keep our schools and wider communities free from the infection.

There are also other ways in which **you can help** a safe return to school:

- Reassuring your child to reduce anxiety
- If your child shows any Covid-19 symptoms, do not send them to school. Arrange for a test.
- Explain your school's Covid-safe measures to your child.
- Walking, cycling and scooting is the healthiest, safest way to travel to school and elsewhere.
- Where your child is entitled to Special Educational Needs and Disabilities transport because of their care plan, this will be available as usual.

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- A small number of clinical vulnerable children and staff will not be able to attend schools. This only applies to children who have had a letter to say that they are extremely clinically vulnerable. If your child is unable to attend school because of registered clinical vulnerability or because they have been instructed to self-isolate following contact with someone with Covid-19, you should continue to ask for remote support with learning.

Anyone without symptoms of Covid-19 can also [book to attend on of Lambeth's LFD testing centres](#). You need to book via the link here. You cannot be tested without an appointment.

Following a recent government announcement, parents of school aged children will be able to access home testing kits shortly. Details will be available shortly on the www.lambeth.gov.uk website.

We know that **for some families who are entitled to benefits such as Universal Credit, Jobseekers allowance and Council Tax support, Covid-19 has been particularly challenging** and extra help may be needed. This be because you are:

- experiencing a crisis or an emergency
- impacted in any way by the Covid-19 crisis, including having a loss of work or change in economic situation, increased caring responsibilities or an increased pressure on your household related to selfisolation or 'lockdown'
- being resettled into the community following a period in institutional or residential care, including former rough sleepers being resettled in the borough after being temporarily accommodated elsewhere due to Covid-19
- in need of support to prevent you entering institutional or residential care
- a family under exceptional pressure
- setting up home as part of a planned resettlement

If this applies to you, please check the Lambeth [Emergency Support Service website](#). Your child may also be entitled to Free School Meals so please check here: [Apply for free school meals - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

Lambeth Council has already distributed about 5,000 laptops but we want to ensure all families have IT access for learning, support and connection even after schools return. To that end we have started a match-funded Crowdfund. Please donate if you can afford it [Lambeth Appeal: End the Digital Divide - a Community crowdfunding project in London by Lambeth Digital Inclusion Fund \(crowdfunder.co.uk\)](#)

In summary, we are delighted to be welcoming your child back to our schools, where attendance is compulsory from the 8th March. All schools have taken extra measures to be safe and are the best place for children to develop safely, so please make sure your child understands the safety measures and ideally walks, cycles or scoots to school. Support is available for families experiencing difficulties so please do contact your child's school or the Lambeth Council emergency support website. Thank you again for your support during this difficult last year – with the vaccine roll-out, better treatments and weather, we look forward to a brighter 2022.


With best wishes

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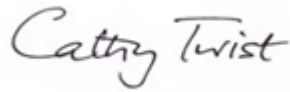
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