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Public Health

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Parents / Guardians
Bolton Schools

Dear Parent / Guardian

Welcoming children and young people back to schools #backtoschoolsafely

As the Director of Public Health, I wanted to welcome your child or children back to school.

I want to provide assurance that the council, alongside its partners, has provided advice and support to all schools throughout the coronavirus pandemic to protect the health, safety and wellbeing of all children, young people, staff, parents and guardians.

It has been a difficult and challenging time for all, and it is understandable if you are anxious about your child, or your children, returning to school. This is especially true because a number of changes will have been put in place by your school, and you will have informed about these changes from your child's school. In addition, the council has published a helpful guide for parents and pupils to help you prepare for your child's return: www.bolton.gov.uk/news/article/886/back-to-school-safely-guide-for-parents-and-pupils-ahead-of-return-to-classroom

To assure you, Bolton Council is working alongside NHS health professionals, education providers, unions, the Department for Education, Public Health England, and GM Health and Social Care Partnership to put in place effective infection prevention and control measures and procedures in all schools. Every school has completed a risk assessment in line with national guidance to ensure all Bolton schools are Covid Safe. We owe a huge thank you to all school staff who have worked tirelessly to care for the children of key workers and vulnerable children throughout the pandemic, and for their preparations during the summer ready for the safe reopening of schools for all children and young people.

We know that attending school is vital for children and young people as it:

- Helps improve educational attainment
- Supports their wellbeing
- Provides opportunities to be more physically active and interactive with others

Director of Public Health – Dr Helen Lowey



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

The risk to children of becoming severely ill from coronavirus (Covid-19) is very low and there are negative health impacts of being out of school.

The UK Chief Medical Officer stated on the 23 August 2020 that “overall, compared to adults, children may have a lower risk of catching Covid-19 (lowest in younger children), definitely have a much lower rate of hospitalisation and severe disease, and an exceptionally low risk of dying from Covid-19.”

He added that children are more likely to be harmed by not returning to school and missing lessons could damage children in the long run - “very few, if any, children or teenagers will come to long-term harm from Covid-19 due solely to attending school. This has to be set against a certainty of long-term harm to many children and young people from not attending school”.

Therefore, the government is encouraging all pupils, in all year groups, to return to schools full-time from the beginning of the autumn term in September.

The public’s health is a key priority for the council and all partners on the local Health Protection Board are closely monitoring the number of Covid-19 positive cases within the borough. Detailed plans are in place in the event of outbreak in key settings:

www.bolton.gov.uk/news/article/831/bolton-council-s-plan-to-help-control-coronavirus-outbreak

However, as you will be aware, the coronavirus is still circulating within the Borough, and we continue to provide support for localised outbreaks in various settings, such as workplaces and care homes. It is therefore realistic for us to expect at some point an outbreak in some of our schools despite the Covid Safe measures, as these rely on the whole school community working together to follow these measures. However, be assured that we are fully prepared to manage any incidents swiftly and effectively.

It is up to all of us to continue to follow the government’s guidance about social distancing (keeping 2m apart and 1m plus an additional measure such as a face covering), regular handwashing, and to self-isolate and get a test if you or your child or children have symptoms, or have been in contact with someone who has tested Covid-19 positive: www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-getting-tested

You may have seen or heard in the news that the government has said the restrictions will continue in the borough due to the recent increased number of residents testing Covid-19 positive. Further information is available on the council website: <https://www.bolton.gov.uk/news>

In addition, Bolton Council has also been made aware of a video containing dangerous false information about schools and Covid-19. The video, shared on social media, claims that schools are testing pupils for coronavirus, without permission from parents, and taking children into quarantine if they test positive. We want to reassure you that this is categorically untrue and urge others not to share the hoax video. There are many myths circulating about coronavirus and I would therefore urge you to check the details are from a reliable source, such as the government or council website, and to report any issues or concerns.

Director of Public Health – Dr Helen Lowey



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

Last week the council, on behalf of the Health Protection Board, wrote to secondary schools to support the wearing of face coverings by staff and pupils in all enclosed communal areas in schools, such as corridors. We are asking parents and guardians of secondary school pupils to support this by supplying your child with a face covering to wear during school, where this is appropriate and possible. Guidance is continuously being updated as we learn more about the coronavirus which informs our advice and control measures.

We understand that you may have specific questions about returning to school, so we have collated further information and FAQs on the Council website:

www.bolton.gov.uk/backtoschoolsafely

If you have a specific query or require further information about your child's school Covid Safe measures, please visit the school website or contact the school directly.

Finally, I'd like to thank you all for your continued support and co-operation in following the governments guidance during this challenging time. Only by working together will we reduce the impact of this pandemic on our loved ones, and only then can we return to socialising with family, friends and colleagues in the near future.

Yours sincerely,



Dr Helen Lowey

Director of Public Health

Director of Public Health – Dr Helen Lowey



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