

To: Parents and Carers

DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES AND SKILLS

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Our Ref. LR/cd

Date: 2 March 2021

Dear Parent and Carer

As the local authority, we wanted to write to you prior to the re-opening of schools across Solihull borough. It has been a really challenging time for you all, managing home learning whilst juggling your other family and work commitments has not been easy. I hope it is as welcome news for you as it is for us that schools will be fully re-opening from the 8th March.

The transmission levels in Solihull are now falling significantly and the roll out of both the testing and the vaccine programme are really helping this. As schools open their doors for all pupils from Monday next week it should be acknowledged how education in Solihull has continued and the quality of remote learning provided has been excellent. We are delighted, however, that all pupils will be coming back into school.

There is still a way to go in fighting this virus and we have to work to minimise the risk of increased transmission across the borough. Schools will still have to work in a COVID safe way. Protective measures implemented in September will still be in place. We all have our part to play and we need to ask you, as parents, to support schools' efforts to remain open - the wearing of face coverings at drop off and pick up, the one-way systems, the staggered starts to the beginning and the end of the day. These measures have been so successful in minimising transmission and schools will be reinstating many of these. Please continue to support your child's school in their efforts and organisation.

Please be aware that secondary schools in Solihull will be implementing a phased return of pupils, as outlined in the government guidance. This is required so that pupils and staff can safely start the process of getting routinely tested for COVID. Not all pupils are going to be in school every day of the week from Monday 8 March. All pupils will be fully returned as early as possible in the week beginning Monday 15 March and your school will be explaining the details for your child.

It is also important to note the changes in guidance regarding the wearing of face coverings in school. Our school leaders value your support in ensuring that pupils who are not exempt

comply fully with the new additional requirement to wear face coverings in secondary settings as outlined in the revised guidance.

Another protective measure we are encouraging in education settings, which would like to make you aware of before your child's return to school, is regular, rapid COVID-19 testing via Lateral Flow Tests:

One in three people who have Covid-19 virus do not have symptoms (they are asymptomatic) so could be spread the virus to others without knowing. Regular lateral-flow-testing, twice per week, helps to identify these positive cases more quickly and break the chains of transmission, protecting both pupils and staff in schools.

If anyone tests positive by lateral flow test, or gets coronavirus symptoms, they should tell the school and:

- self-isolate immediately along with the rest of their household
- get a PCR test to confirm the result
- follow the [stay at home guidance for households with possible coronavirus infection](#)

A negative lateral flow result means the test did not find signs of the virus but **this does not guarantee you do not have Covid-19**, so you should keep following all [coronavirus advice](#) including including:

- regular handwashing
- social distancing
- wearing a face covering where recommended

Regular testing of those without symptoms is crucial to reduce the virus spread.

Lateral flow testing is only for those without COVID-19 symptoms. For those with COVID symptoms, a test can be booked online at <https://www.gov.uk/get-coronavirus-test> or by phoning 119.

We understand that this is still an anxious time for many families and the local authority has set up support for parents with attendance and wellbeing concerns. The Solihull Community Educational Psychology Service is providing direct access telephone consultation services for parents and carers who live in Solihull. This service is available Monday to Friday and can help with a range of concerns, including:

- *How best to look after your own and/or your child's mental and emotional well-being on a daily basis*
- *How to talk with children about COVID-19 and their worries related to it*
- *How best to maintain social connections whilst complying with social distancing*
- *How to manage behaviour that can be challenging or difficult to manage*

If you would like to arrange a consultation, please call 0121 779 1734. This helpline can also be used by parents who have any other concerns about supporting their children's attendance at school.

There may still be times when schools are faced with bubble closures as a result of a positive case. The local system for this is extremely well established and will continue to operate in the

coming months. Again we hope that these occasions will be rare, but schools will be accessing the right support and guidance when this is the case.

Our education providers have been turning their attention to the guidance around “catch up” and ensuring that all pupils access the most appropriate support when and if they need to. This work will be on-going in the months to come and we are delighted to hear about the opportunities schools will be providing. We need to do this in a careful and sensitive way that does not add to worries and anxieties children may already have after so much disruption.

We also wanted to say a huge thank you to you all; the parents and carers of all of our Solihull children and young people. We do not underestimate how difficult the past year has been for you and your families. You have done an amazing job and should feel very proud of your efforts in living through this pandemic. I am sure we will reflect on the lessons learnt from this experience for many years to come.

So on behalf of our schools and education settings, we are looking forward to pupils returning next week. If we continue to work together, we will get through these difficult and challenging times and begin to see the green shoots of recovery coming through.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Louise Rees". The signature is written in dark ink and includes a long, sweeping underline stroke that extends to the left and then curves back under the name.

Louise Rees
Director of Children’s Services and Skills