



London Borough of Hounslow
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Date: Friday 14 May 2021

Dear Parents and Carers,

I want to thank all the children, young people and their families who are playing an important part in keeping infection levels in schools and in the community low.

As the next stage of the roadmap out of lockdown starts from Monday 17th May this is a timely opportunity to ask you to be aware that the virus has not gone away. Whilst most areas of the country are seeing rates of Covid-19 reduce, our rate of Covid-19 infection in the Borough has started to increase again, and we currently have the highest rate of infection in London, and 19th highest in England, we are also having to respond rapidly to occasional cases of the variants first identified in India and South Africa, which have been detected across the capital. In a city of London's size, population density, mobility and international travel links, variants are likely to be part of how we live with Covid-19 so it's key that we adapt and respond to the changing nature of the virus in a way that works for our residents and our schools. The recent increase is particularly amongst our school age groups.

All the steps that you, your children, families, and schools have taken to suppress the virus over the last months have been very effective. It is more important than ever that we continue with them as we carefully return to normal life.

You will have heard the Prime Minister's announcement that from Monday 17th May the advice is that face coverings are no longer a requirement for children and young people in school. I have asked schools to be cautious about this advice and to use their discretion as the case numbers are increasing. This is alongside reminding students to maintain good hand hygiene, and where practical social distancing. I have appreciated the key role Headteachers have had throughout the last year, taking decisive action to protect their school community, thorough risk assessments all of which has contributed to protecting the wider community. I ask that parents and carers now trust and support the school to make a decision about the use of face masks in school going forward, which for some schools may be to continue with mask wearing. I ask that you wear face coverings if bringing your child to school or collecting them. This helps us keep schools safe.

Unfortunately, we are aware of a small number of people who are not isolating when they or a member of the household tests positive, and this has led to further cases amongst friendship, school and outside school activity groups which can be avoided. If you are isolating and need support you can get information from www.hounslow.gov/hub

As we are seeing an increase in cases, can I ask that you contribute to safely reducing infection spread and protecting our most vulnerable residents. There are many tools to keep all of us safe from Covid-19 – regular free testing, effective vaccines, practising the simple but powerful prevention measures of space – face – hands and fresh air, and following the current restrictions in place. Please also be aware that if you are vaccinated you can still catch Covid-19, and pass it on to others, the protection from the vaccination is that symptoms are often not experienced – so please continue to get regularly tested and if you are eligible for a vaccination, do so and protect yourself. The more people vaccinated the safer our communities.

It is more important than ever that we continue to play our part, if we all do, we protect ourselves, our families, and our communities and we can more safely return to normal, less restrictive, life.

With thanks and best wishes,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kelly O'Neill', with a horizontal line underneath the name.

Kelly O'Neill
Director of Public Health
London Borough of Hounslow