

Our ref:

Your ref:

Date: 2<sup>nd</sup> March 2021

Email: [KrishnaRamkhelawon@southend.gov.uk](mailto:KrishnaRamkhelawon@southend.gov.uk)

Dear Parents/Carers,

### **Returning to school and Covid-19 testing for pupils**

I am writing to you as your local Director of Public Health to let you know about the increase in Covid-19 testing in the Borough, to support the safe return of all schools from Monday 8 March 2021.

We have been carrying out a programme of community asymptomatic testing (for people not experiencing any symptoms) for many weeks now, which is helping to reduce the risk of people without symptoms, unknowingly spreading the virus to others in the community.

To keep schools safe and protect the wider community, I am encouraging pupils of all ages to get a rapid LFD test before they return to school from next week. I also strongly encourage anyone they live with to also get a test to make sure that anyone who may be infectious does not come to school with the virus and potentially start an outbreak.

If your child attends an education setting in Southend-on-Sea but your family lives outside of the Borough, please visit your relevant local authority website to find out more about their own community testing programme.

Please read the information below and please contact or visit the website of your child's education setting to find out more about the school testing programme in place from 8 March, which varies across all settings.

Yours faithfully



Krishna Ramkhelawon  
Director of Public Health  
Southend-on-Sea Borough Council

**Book a test at one of our rapid test sites before returning to school on Monday 8 March.**

**We are encouraging all** school-aged children to take an asymptomatic test at one of the following sites which are open seven days a week and accessible to all. You can book a test at [www.southend.gov.uk/gettested](http://www.southend.gov.uk/gettested) or simply turn up.

- **University Square**, Southend-on-Sea (opposite Sainsbury's). 7am to 2.30pm, pay and display parking available
- **St Aidan's Church**, The Fairway, Leigh-on-Sea, SS9 4QW. 7am to 5:30pm, there is limited onsite parking in St. Aidan's church car park
- **Shoebury Youth Centre** (rear sports hall), Delaware Road, Shoeburyness, SS3 9NS. 8am to 6:30pm, parking is available.
- In addition, a site is also available for school pupils and their families only at **Southend Leisure and Tennis Centre**, Eastern Avenue, Southend-on-Sea, SS2 4FA. This is open from 8am to 8pm, parking is available. Accessibility: there are 10 steps on the exit, if you need ramp access please let the staff know.

### **Consent:**

Children must be over the age of 11 to attend a test site without a parent, outside of a scheduled school slot, and the young person must have proof of parental consent with them, for staff to be able to test them. This can be digital or on paper and will be arranged through the school.

Please **do not** book or turn up for a test at the rapid LFD sites if:

- You have any symptoms of Covid-19 (a high temperature, a new continuous cough, or loss or change to your sense of smell or taste)
- You have had a positive test (LFD or PCR) in the last 90 days
- You have been in contact with anyone in the last 10 days who has symptoms or tested positive

### **School testing programme from Monday 8 March**

There will be a number of ways for children in further education and secondary schools to access testing, based on which school you attend. Please check your school or education setting's website for further details and information.

We are also supporting the school testing programme, and as part of this, St John Ambulance has kindly agreed to provide four mobile testing units, which will be placed within the grounds of some schools to help keep them Covid-safe. Community testing staff will run the units, alongside staff from Southend United Community and Educational Trust who will be going to each mobile testing unit, Monday to Friday to marshal and support the children and school.

### **Face masks**

Research has shown that face masks, when worn correctly over the mouth and nose, play a significant role in reducing the spread of virus' such as Covid-19.

The DfE is also now also recommending that face coverings are worn by secondary-age pupils in classrooms, only where social distancing cannot be maintained and unless a young person is medically exempt from wearing one. Secondary and college pupils are already required to wear a face covering when moving around school buildings in corridors and communal areas, as well as when travelling to and from school on public transport.

Parents are also asked to wear a face mask, unless they are exempt, when dropping off and picking up their children from an education setting, including school, nursery and childminders.