



4 March 2021

Dear Parent or Carer,

The announcement of the return to classroom learning in schools and colleges for more children and young people from 8 March is very welcome. Schools and colleges worked incredibly hard to set up remote learning at short notice in January, and we thank you and your child for responding with understanding and patience. If your child has been learning remotely, thank you for all the support you have been able to give, often in difficult and challenging circumstances. We fully appreciate the perseverance and commitment you have given, alongside any caring and work responsibilities.

If you have been unable to provide a great deal of support, that's okay. Schools and colleges are fully aware of the challenges many families have faced during this period.

However advanced remote learning from schools and colleges has been, it cannot fully replace the full experience and richness of face-to-face learning. Being in school or college gives children and young people the chance to develop, learn more quickly and socialise.

### **Who Can Return**

A small number of children and young people may be unable to attend school or college in line with public health advice to self-isolate. You should not send your child to school or college if they:

- have [symptoms](#) of coronavirus (COVID-19) or live in a household with someone who has symptoms
- have tested positive themselves, even if they do not have symptoms
- live in a household with someone who has tested positive, even if that person does not have symptoms
- are a close contact of someone who has coronavirus (COVID-19)
- are required to self-isolate for travel-related reasons

Government guidance now indicates that many children identified at the start of the pandemic as clinically extremely vulnerable, are not at increased risk of serious outcomes from coronavirus (COVID-19). Children are gradually being removed from the shielding patient list as appropriate, following review with a clinician. If your child is confirmed as clinically extremely vulnerable, they are advised not to attend school or college until further notice.

Find out more at [What parents need to know about early years providers, schools and colleges during COVID-19 - GOV.UK](#)

### **Return Dates and Times**

Check your school or college website or correspondence for any staggered return dates for your child. These may be used in secondary schools and colleges to allow for the introduction of new infection control measures, including logistical arrangements for testing. Check for any amendments to start and finish times for your child. Times may vary from those last year and may also apply to children and young people who have been learning in school or college to date.

## Returning to the Classroom Safely & Symptom-Free Testing

Coronavirus infection rates in Surrey have fallen significantly in recent weeks, but the risk of infection in our community and pressure on our NHS remains high. The health risks of coronavirus to the vast majority of children and young people remain low. Measures including one-way systems, bubbles, sanitation and ventilation will continue to be in place in schools and colleges. All pupils and students in Year 7 and above should wear a face covering in school or college during the period from 8 March, unless they have an exemption.

If your child is at secondary school or college, they will be offered rapid symptom-free tests for coronavirus through their school or college. Regular rapid testing means people who have COVID-19 but no symptoms may be identified and required to self-isolate.

The government has announced that if you're a member of a household, childcare bubble or support bubble of a school pupil, college student or of a staff member, you can get twice-weekly symptom-free tests. You can use any testing offered by your employer, **book** an appointment online at a [symptom-free](#) testing site, **collect** a home-testing kit from a [designated](#) collection point, or if unable to travel to a site, **order** a kit online. Find out more at [surreycc.gov.uk/symptomfreecovidtesting](https://surreycc.gov.uk/symptomfreecovidtesting).

Rapid symptom-free testing cannot and does not replace all other measures that you, your child and your school or college must follow to help restrict the spread of the disease. Continue to follow the national guidance at [gov.uk/coronavirus](https://gov.uk/coronavirus).

If your child or a household or bubble member develop COVID-19 symptoms, **do not** use school, college or household and bubble symptom-free testing. Book a free test at [gov.uk/get-coronavirus-test](https://gov.uk/get-coronavirus-test) or call 119.

## Staying Safe Outside Class

Your child must follow the government guidance in force when outside of school or college. The changes around the gradual easing of lockdown apply equally to young people, even if they are part of a *bubble* when inside the controlled education environment. Maintain a social distance from other families. Consider dropping your child away from the school gate if safe to do so. Remember “*Hands – Face – Space*”. Help to keep your household, community and the NHS safe.

## Adjusting to School and College again

You or your child may be worried about returning to class, the progress they will make this year or any assessment of it. Your school or college will communicate regularly with you about this. If you or your child feel anxious, that can be expected but, it is important to take action early. There are lots of tips on ways to cope along with sources of help available at [Healthy Surrey](#). Children and young people in Surrey can also chat confidentially and anonymously to other young people and mental wellbeing professionals online at [Kooth](#).

How ever challenging these times may be, we will continue to support you and make sure that your child can progress towards a successful and enjoyable future.



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