

**Hackney Education**  
Hackney Council  
1 Reading Lane  
Hackney  
London  
E8 1GQ

To: Headteachers/Principals all  
Hackney maintained schools,  
academies and independent schools

29 December 2021

Dear Headteacher/Principal,

### **Covid-19 Actions for Schools: start of Spring term**

After a busy end to the autumn term, I hope that you and your school's staff and students managed to have a restful break.

We wish you all a safe, happy and successful 2022. We also recognise that the start of this term will have some challenges for us to manage so that our children get a consistent and high quality education as possible.

Cases of Covid-19 are now at their highest levels since the start of the pandemic, with the highly transmissible Omicron now the dominant variant. This is continuing to put essential services under significant pressure, due to staff across services being ill or needing to self isolate, and with increased care in hospitals for increased numbers of people with severe disease.

With the possibility of high staff and pupil absence during January, it is important for you to review your risk assessments and outbreak control plans including how to respond to potential increased staff absence where this makes it hard to maintain face to face learning for every class.

We [wrote to you in November](#) setting out a series of simple measures to implement to help lower the risk of Covid-19 transmission. With high Covid-19 incidence in the borough and the increased transmissibility of the Omicron variant, we wanted to repeat the importance of these measures, as well as to strengthen some of them. If not done so already, we are strongly recommending education settings across Hackney consider undertaking the following with immediate effect:



- **Use of face coverings** - we are increasing our advice regarding this by mandating that, except for individual exemptions, face coverings are worn by all staff and students in year 7 and above in communal areas. We are also mandating that face coverings are worn in secondary school / college classes by pupils or staff when they are moving around the classroom or when there is no direct impact on communication / learning (e.g. during silent reading, individual working). Visitors to the school must also wear face coverings when onsite.
- **Working in “bubbles”** - children, young people and staff should, where possible, work in ‘bubbles’ which reduce interaction across year groups and classes. Playground interaction should also be kept to a minimum across bubbles.
- **Frequently promote regular home / lateral flow testing** - encouraging all asymptomatic staff and pupils in year 7 & above to carry this out at least twice a week. Where possible & appropriate, also encourage frequent testing across the whole household. Keep the profile of regular testing high through the use of a broad range of clear messaging and different forms of communication. We recognise all secondary pupils will have on site testing before a return to class in January.
- **Increase ventilation** - we appreciate that this measure will be harder over the colder months. However, it continues to be important to open windows to encourage airflow and increase fresh air, so reducing the concentration of virus particles in indoor air. Also use CO2 monitors to indicate when best to open windows.
- **Reduce indoor gathering and mixing**, where possible, between year groups and staff groups (e.g. hold virtual rather than whole school assemblies, consider online staff meetings and training days where possible). Where possible, review how staff rooms are being used to ensure social distancing.
- **Reduce the number of visitors onsite** - where possible and appropriate, consider holding virtual meetings with parents and professionals, rather than meeting face to face.
- **Promote social distancing** between staff, students and parents when onsite.
- **Promote good hand hygiene practises**, ensuring there is plenty of opportunity for staff, students and visitors to wash / sanitise their hands regularly
- **Vaccination** - this continues to be an important way to reduce transmission and the impact of the virus and we ask that you continue to promote this across your staff and eligible students. All adults aged over 18 and young people aged over 12 should be vaccinated. Young people aged 12-15 can now also get a 2nd dose of the vaccine, so long as it has been more than 12 weeks since the first dose; this cohort, however, requires parental consent to be vaccinated. All eligible individuals can book an appointment online via [The National Booking Service](#) or by telephoning 119.

We are also writing to parents / carers seeking their support with these measures and ask that you share this letter with them when we send it to you.

In addition to the above, you should also review and update as appropriate your C19 risk assessments and contingency / outbreak management plans. This will ensure you have measures and resources in place to respond to any actions you may need to

take in the event of excessive case numbers or high staff absences making it hard to keep the school fully open. Please ensure that staff are aware of the revised [guidance](#) for self isolation periods. It is now possible to end self-isolation after 7 days, following 2 negative LFD tests taken 24 hours apart. The first LFD test should not be taken before the sixth day.

And finally please continue to inform Hackney Education and Hackney Public Health of confirmed Covid-19 cases in your school, as soon as you are alerted to them. This allows us to monitor cases across our school community and provide consistent and coordinated responses, as appropriate. We, therefore, ask that you continue to report all cases using our [online form](#).

Please also remember that we have arranged a Covid-19 Headteachers briefing for **Thursday, 6 January at 12noon until 1pm**. You should have received an invitation for this already, but if not, please email [hilary.smith@hackney.gov.uk](mailto:hilary.smith@hackney.gov.uk)

Once again, thank you for all your work and leadership to keep schools open and to ensure face to face learning can continue wherever possible. .

Yours sincerely,



**Annie Gammon**  
Director of Education



**Dr Sandra Husbands**  
Director of Public Health