

26th February 2021

Dear parent/carer,

You will have heard the Government's announcement that schools will open fully in England from 8th March. We know that for many of you the news will be welcomed and for some it will be a worrying time.

It is important to remember that for most children, COVID-19 is a very mild illness, but children can still carry the virus and pass it to others, even if they have no symptoms at all. This is why the protective measures at school must remain for the time being; and why we need your support to make sure that our schools are as safe as they can be – for your children, for the staff, for your family and for everyone else in the community.

We still have a very high COVID-19 rate in Calderdale, and this means that the return to school is one of the only major loosening of restrictions that we can consider at the moment. This is without risking another rise in cases and a return to lockdown. The Government message is still to stay at home as much as possible and avoid contact with others from outside of your household as much as you can.

Each school has its own risk assessment and controls in place to ensure they can operate as safely as possible. We would like to thank the very many parents and carers who have been supporting their child's learning at home. We know that has been challenging for many of you. It is now very important that all children return to face-to-face learning and are able to benefit from the social and emotional aspects of school along with their academic work. The Government has been clear that attendance is mandatory once all children return to school so if you have any concerns about your child attending, please do discuss those with your child's school.

Please respect social distancing at drop-off and pick-up. Schools will have measures in place to make it as safe as possible, and enforcement officers from the Council or the Police will be checking people are doing the right thing. Use a face covering unless you are exempt. Remember, new strains of COVID-19 can pass between people much more easily than the strain that was most common when schools were last fully open. It can be really tempting to stop and chat with a friend you haven't seen for months, or to invite a much-loved classmate round for a playdate or sleepover, but we must wait a while longer to do these things.

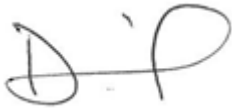
If your child is at secondary school, please do consent to them taking part in lateral flow unless there is a medical reason not to do so. The tests can be done at home and involve just a quick nose swab. They are already in widespread use in workplaces, hospitals and

care settings. Locally, we've already seen how well they work in stopping outbreaks in our schools and nurseries. The tests won't be used to keep children in school who have been in contact with someone who has tested positive, but they will help us to find the 1 in 3 people who have COVID-19 without symptoms (but who can still pass it to others).

We all want a return to some sort of normality – for our children and for ourselves - but it is so important that we continue to follow the restrictions that are in place, because they are there to protect us all.

Thank you all again and we all look forward to the loosening of further measures as immunity builds in Calderdale through the vaccination programme.

If you or your child have any concerns about COVID-19, contact the Healthy Futures Calderdale school nursing team by phone on **0303 330 9974** or by text on **07480 635297 (young people)** or **07507 332157 (parents/carers)**.



Deborah Harkins
Director of Public Health



Julie Jenkins
Director of Children and Young People's
Services