



Heathcote School & Science College

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Headteacher: Emma Hillman NPQH, MSc, MA

14/12/2020



Dear Parent/Carer,



I have finally received the letter from the LA (Strategic Director for Families and Director of Public Health) which contains the following guidance in writing which, as a maintained school, I need to follow:



This is a critical time and necessitates immediate and decisive action to control the spread of the virus. I am recommending that all schools in Waltham Forest move to remote learning and remain open only to support the children of key workers and vulnerable children.



I have also attached a letter from Grace Williams to all parents - Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Families.

This is as a result of:



We now have some of the highest rates of COVID-19 anywhere in the country. In the last seven days 1,307 people have tested positive in our community. All areas of the borough have high rates of community transmission and this is consistent among all age groups. The rate of infection per 100k resident population in the borough stands at 406 and indicates we have entered a period of exponential growth. The latest data clearly shows that the rate of infection is doubling in Waltham Forest every 4 days.



The following will now be implemented:



supporting individual excellence



- Pupils will stay at home between now and the end of term and should access on-line learning from tomorrow (Tuesday 15th) period 1 until the end of Friday 18th period 2. Further details will follow about next term.
- Lessons will be live where possible and we will be monitoring attendance.
- Sickness that prevents pupils logging on should be called into the school as normal.
- Pupils and families who come to be tested tomorrow will not be penalised for missing relevant lessons – see MTU section.
- Where staff are absent, lessons may not be live but pupils should access the resources and respond to the teacher as directed.
- Places will be available in school for vulnerable and key worker pupils. Mr Hutchins will be contacting some families directly. Otherwise, please email me directly before tomorrow morning (ehillman@heathcote.waltham.sch.uk) if you wish to have a place in school.
- We still have some allocated Google Chromebooks to give out and will aim to ensure pupils have these as soon as possible and definitely before the end of term. I have received a small number more from the DfE so please do contact the Teaching and Learning team via email if your child has no access to a computer or equivalent device at home.

Mobile Testing Unit

- It seems most likely that we will be hosting a mobile testing unit (MTU) on site tomorrow and inviting children and families in different year groups to come to the site for testing. However, this has not yet been confirmed. If this does happen, we will be monitoring numbers and will begin with focusing on Year 11-13 and their families.
- We will therefore invite Year 12 and 13 to school between 9 and 11 am and Year 11 at 11 am. You may come to school with your families and we will ensure a safe passage through to the MTU. **This is only for pupils and direct family of the pupil.** There will be the opportunity to provide consent on the day for under 16s if family are there but you can also provide this electronically in advance using this attached link- <https://www.walthamforest.gov.uk/content/mobile-testing-centres>. Any pupil who is under 16 and comes alone will not be able to have the test unless the consent is completed in advance. Pupils over 16 can turn up alone but family are welcome.
- We plan to open this up after 12pm for Year 10 and below but if it is quiet in the morning, may invite other pupils to come down earlier. Please keep a close eye on Parent Mail. We will also send out updates if it is very busy.
- These are the same units that were in the borough at the weekend and I would urge you to follow Public Health and NHS guidance and get tested.
- I know that many of you are concerned about Christmas and what this will mean if you get a positive test result. You would of course need to self-isolate over the Christmas period. Whilst this is a horrible thought, we must really focus on what is best for our community and these tests will help reduce the number of people without symptoms transmitting the virus.
- The MTU has capacity for over 400 tests and it would be great to see a large number of you supporting the local and national efforts.
- Please do not attend the MTU if you have any symptoms; you should attend an alternative testing site if this is the guidance you have received.

As a summary of the term, the school has had 16 pupil cases and 14 staff cases since September. We have had 3 positive cases in Year 8 today but they appear to be unrelated.

I am immensely proud of all of you and your pupils as you know and all my staff who have worked so hard to support learning and safeguarding since the pandemic begun.

I urge you to please follow the Tier 3 guidance from Wednesday, stay safe and please do not break the national rules. We all want to get back to normality as soon as possible and that means sacrifices for all of us.

I will keep you updated with further information but please ensure you check Parent Mail tomorrow. I may also be sending out further self-isolation notices if we have any more positive cases.

If you have any questions, please ask.

All the best



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14 December 2020

Dear parents, carers, and guardians,

I am writing to inform you that the situation in Waltham Forest in relation to COVID-19 is escalating at a rate that shows signs that we have entered a period of significant growth in the virus.

We now have some of the highest rates of COVID-19 anywhere in the country. In the last seven days alone, 1,307 people have tested positive. The rate of infection is at 406 people per 100 000 in the population and continuing to rise at an alarming rate.

This is a critical time and we believe that we need decisive action to control the spread of the virus in Waltham Forest.

We have been speaking with Primary and Secondary School Headteachers, and teachers Unions across the borough. With their support we are recommending that all schools move to online learning and only remain open for key worker and vulnerable children. We think that this should be done as soon as possible.

Your own child's school will notify you of their decisions and arrangements.

This is not a decision that has been taken lightly, and we recognise the disruption this will cause your children and to you. This emergency action is needed because of the high level of infection rates alongside the time of the year where we know that people are planning to get together over Christmas.

We are committed to the education and welfare of all children. Our schools have looked closely at updating their risk management processes so that we are confident children are safe during this time.

I hope that you will recognise that this decision does not mean an immediate or extended Christmas holiday. You will be informed by your child's school of the online arrangements for continued learning.

Our teaching and school staff are committed to providing the best education for the children of Waltham Forest and have shown their drive and passion throughout this challenging year. They will continue to strive for the very best for our young people.



The Council has allocated food vouchers for every school and nursery pupil on Free School Meals and the Early Years Pupil Premium to use during the Christmas holiday. School will give parents and carers access to these vouchers, but if your child is eligible and you do not receive this before the end of term please contact freeschoolmealsparentscarers@edenred.com or call 0333 400 5932.

We must do what we can to help to stop the rapid spread of the virus. We have been working with the Government to increase the amount of testing in the borough and we are especially keen for children aged 11 to 18, and their parents, carers, and guardians, to get a test.

We know that children can develop COVID-19. Whilst many have no symptoms, they are capable of spreading the infection. Information on mobile testing centres in the borough can be found on the Council's website at www.walthamforest.gov.uk/testing. You can also phone 0208 496 3000 if you need a test.

It is vital that we all continue to follow the Hands Face Space guidance – wash your hands regularly with soap, cover your face indoors in public areas, and keep a two-metre distance from others where possible. In accordance with the Government's guidance, do not mix with anyone who is not part of your household or support bubble when you are indoors.

Please keep up to date with the Council's communications and news. You can get the latest advice about the local response to COVID-19 at www.walthamforest.gov.uk/Covid-19

You can order free reusable face-masks at www.walthamforest.gov.uk/face-masks

Yours faithfully



Councillor Grace Williams
Cabinet Member for Children, Young People & Families