**Tameside schools prepare to welcome back all pupils**

Press release: 4/3/21

Schools across Tameside are well prepared to welcome back pupils when they fully reopen next week.

Every educational setting has safety measures in place, including keeping children in consistent groups or bubbles, social distancing implemented where possible, enhanced cleaning regimes, stringent hand washing and rigorous risk assessments, and will inform parents of their individual approach.

Tameside Council’s Children’s Service, Public Health, Health and Safety and HR teams have worked with schools and colleges to support them.

All primary schools fully reopen on Monday (8 March) with all secondary schools and further education colleges returning from that date in a staggered approach consistent with the Government’s roadmap.

Wraparound childcare for primary and secondary pupils will resume where necessary to enable parents to access work, education or medical care.

Primary school staff will continue to take two rapid coronavirus tests each week at home. Students will have three coronavirus tests at secondary schools and colleges in school and will then be provided with two rapid tests to use each week at home.

Secondary school pupils are now required to wear face coverings in classrooms as well as communal areas where social distancing cannot be maintained.

The rapid testing will help limit transmission and prevent outbreaks. It enables anyone with asymptomatic infection to be detected quickly and to self-isolate. Face coverings in classrooms are an extra measure to keep everyone as safe as possible.

Tameside’s schools are well practised in reducing the risk from coronavirus and have worked tirelessly throughout the pandemic, staying open for vulnerable children and the children of key workers during lockdowns while providing remote education.

While Covid rates in Tameside are decreasing they remain high, so it’s vital that lockdown rules are followed by everyone.

Parents are urged to ensure that their children don’t mingle outside of school, not to gather at school gates and to remember social distancing at all times.

Cllr Leanne Feeley, Tameside Council Executive Member for Lifelong Learning, said: “It’s fantastic that schools are fully reopening, which is vital for our children’s wellbeing and education and is one of the first steps out of lockdown that we wanted to see happen. All the safety measures in place, including rapid testing and face coverings in classrooms, will maximise the safety of the school environment.

“Staff, parents and pupils can also be reassured by scientific evidence that shows transmission in schools is low and that children are not particularly drivers of infection in schools or the wider community. Rates are driven by transmission in the wider community so it remains essential that we don’t mix with other households and follow restrictions outside the school gates so that schools can stay open and children can attend without further disruption.”

Tameside Council Executive Leader Councillor Brenda Warrington said: “Covid rates in Tameside have started to decrease again but they remain among the highest in the country so we must keep sticking to the rules to help bring them down further and protect each other.

“Not enough vulnerable people have been vaccinated yet for us to start to relax and high rates of Covid give the virus a greater chance to mutate into a variant that may not respond to control measures, so it’s vital that we do all we can to help reduce transmission.

“I’d like to thank everyone involved for their hard work and dedication in getting us to this position where schools can fully reopen. It’s a crucial point on our road to recovery and we must all do our bit to ensure that recent reductions are sustained.”

For further information on the local response to coronavirus, please visit [www.tameside.gov.uk/coronavirus](http://www.tameside.gov.uk/coronavirus)