

DPH Letter to secondary school parents and carers

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16th December 2020

Dear Parents/Carers,

I am writing to you at an important time when there is rising concern about the rapid increase in the rates of COVID-19 infections across Sutton and the whole of London. Like many of you, my own family and children have been affected by the large number of outbreaks that have hit our secondary schools in particular, including special schools.

Significantly, the government announced today that families with secondary school children can now access testing even if none of you have any symptoms. This offer is now open and you can book a test for all adults and children in your family through the national website at <https://www.gov.uk/get-coronavirus-test>

Or if you prefer you can book a test by phone by ringing 119.

I would especially like to request that you get all of your children tested before they return to secondary school next term and ideally during the week beginning 27th December.

If we all do this then this will help detect positive cases -including asymptomatic cases - isolating them at home to recover while keeping the whole school community safe.

When asked to specify a reason for requesting a test please just select the following option from the menu:

'My local council or health protection team has asked me (or someone I live with) to get a test, even though I do not have symptoms

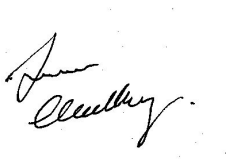
These tests are not mandatory and form part of a national programme to reduce the potential of the virus spreading. Anyone who does not have symptoms of COVID-19 but has previously tested positive for coronavirus will not need to be retested for 90 days.

We recognise that for families of pupils with SEND the prospect of visiting a local testing site with secondary age pupils with special education needs might be daunting and difficult depending on the needs of the child. We have therefore distributed home testing kits to all our special schools and opportunity bases that for families of secondary age children. If families want to test their pupils at home (as well as themselves) then they will be able to do so. Details of the process for this have been shared with schools directly who will be passing this information on to you.

It's important to remember that the test result tells you whether you have Covid-19 at the moment you take it. It does not tell you whether you've previously had Covid-19. If you get a negative result, it does not mean you will remain Covid-negative for any specified length of time. This means that it is vitally important that we all continue our individual efforts in following the current rules!

So the simple messaging around HANDS, FACE and SPACE remain crucial and if any of your family develop symptoms please do isolate at HOME and book yourself a COVID test as quickly as you can (see <https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus> for all the latest guidance).

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Imran Choudhury', is written over a faint, light-colored circular stamp or watermark.

Dr Imran Choudhury
Director of Public Health