



Laurence House  
1 Catford Road  
SE6 4RU

11 January 2021

### [Message to Lewisham secondary school/ college parents and carers](#)

Dear Parents and Carers

Across the country and particularly in London and the South East, Coronavirus continues to spread rapidly and Lewisham's infection rate is at its highest ever level. We must all stay at home as much as possible. This is why schools and colleges have been asked to remain open only for critical worker and vulnerable children.

Our schools and colleges are working hard to deliver teaching and learning both to pupils at home and those attending on site and to keep children and adults who are on site as safe as possible.

#### **Keeping the number of people in schools and colleges as low as possible**

We need to ensure that the number of children and young people in schools and colleges is kept as low as possible, whilst making sure that children who need to be in school can be.

The government says that this is not because schools and colleges have become less safe for children and young people. Having fewer people in schools and colleges is about reducing the overall number of contacts everyone has in the community, which is important to help reduce the pressure on the NHS.

**During this lockdown, children and young people should stay at home where possible.**

#### **Critical workers**

The government guidance during lockdown says that parents and carers who are critical workers should keep their children at home if they can.

Please only use the offer of a school/college place when it is crucial for you to undertake your critical role. If you can make an alternative arrangement, we ask you to consider this. Your child's school or college will speak to parents and carers to identify who needs to attend on site and also may ask for evidence that your work is critical to the COVID-19 response or EU Transition.

Here is the list of [critical workers](#).

### **Vulnerable children and young people – including those with education, health and care plans or a social worker**

If your child/ren has an education, health and care plan (EHCP) and/or an allocated social worker or other circumstances listed at the link below they may attend their school/college. Your school/college will have contacted you if your child/ren should be coming in and will discuss arrangements with you. Please get in touch with the school/college if you have any queries.

Here is the list of [DfE definition of vulnerable children](#).

### **Government advice on leaving children unattended**

There is no law about when you can leave your child on their own but it is an offence to leave them alone if it places them at risk. As parents, you should use your judgement on how mature your child is before you decide to leave them at home. As a guide, the NSPCC recommends that children under 12 are rarely mature enough to be left alone for a long period of time, children under 16 shouldn't be left alone overnight and babies, toddlers and very young children should never be left alone.

### **Community testing for critical workers**

If you are a parent or carer currently working in a critical role and unable to work from home, you can now book an appointment for a rapid COVID-19 test which will give you results in under an hour. Your child's school/college will inform you about testing arrangements for secondary-age pupils who are attending school or college.

Rapid tests are only open to children **over the age of 11**.

Rapid tests are only available to people **who do NOT have COVID-19 symptoms**.

For more information please go to <https://lewisham.gov.uk/communitytesting>.

We recognise the challenges everyone is facing at the moment, particularly families with children and young people. The DfE has information about [supporting your children's education during coronavirus](#). If you need more help and support with home learning, please contact your school or college directly in the first place.

There is information on Lewisham Council website about [help and support available at this time](#).

Best wishes,



**Pinaki Ghoshal**  
Executive Director for  
Children and Young People



**Angela Scattergood**  
Director of Education