

Dear parent/carer/guardian,

Firstly, we would like to say a huge thank you to you for supporting your child's childcare provider during the latest lockdown. We know each family will have faced different challenges and that this has been a difficult time for many of you.

Many early years staff have worked throughout the pandemic and we recognise their efforts to continue to provide childcare and learning in a safe environment. Most pre-school settings have been fully open since January and for some since September. We are really appreciative of this, especially as distancing in settings is very difficult to achieve.

As you will be aware, mainstream schools and colleges will be returning from 8 March for all students. Please be aware that these arrangements will be based on the national guidance but will vary in individual schools and settings, particularly in relation to the initial testing of secondary age pupils. The testing arrangements will depend on the physical space of each school and college, the number of pupils and also the staffing available.

To keep your child and your family safe and infection rates low, there will be measures in place in pre-school settings, schools and colleges. Some of these you will be familiar with from the autumn term and this term there may be new measures in addition to bubbles, social distancing, fresh air and hand washing. It could also be the case that some facilities at special schools may not be available immediately.

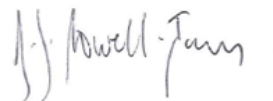
Staff in early years settings will be able to undertake testing twice a week. The capacity to home test will become available to staff in the next two to three weeks. This is a national government initiative and builds on the testing that is already being made available at places around Herefordshire. Home testing should make this more convenient for staff.

Finally, please remember that the restrictions on households mixing will remain in place. We ask you to play your part and continue to follow the rules on social distancing and the wearing of face coverings, particularly on the way to and from school and pre-school settings.

Yours sincerely



Chris Baird
DIRECTOR CHILDREN & FAMILIES



Rebecca Howell-Jones
ACTING DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC HEALTH