

Dear Parents/Carers

Below is information received today from Thurrock Council. I would ask you to take note of the new Tier 3 restrictions in place from Wednesday 16<sup>th</sup> December.

Best wishes

M Jones

Headteacher

### A Message from Thurrock Council Leader, Cllr Rob Gledhill

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The government has today announced that Thurrock will be entering tier 3 restrictions from Wednesday 16 December. This is not the decision any of us were hoping for, but the increasing rate of community transmission across the south east has led to some of the highest positive test rates in the country, which has meant the government has taken the decision to place Thurrock, as well as most of Essex and all of London into tier 3 restrictions.

This means that pubs, bars and restaurants will have to close except for takeaway and delivery services. This includes all outdoor seating areas, and people must not meet in groups of more than six outdoors in public parks. However all other shops and businesses may remain open, along with hairdressers, barbers and other direct contact services.

I appreciate that this is not the most desirable outcome to say the least, and it will be a big blow to many including to our hospitality sector and the supply chain.

Unfortunately we did not have the same opportunity to discuss the local position with ministers that we had before the last tier decision, which is disappointing. We will continue to work with partners in our local sub-region to move out of tier 3 as quickly as possible.

We are now operating three Mobile Testing Units in Grays, Tilbury and Corringham and we are urging all parents and carers of children aged 11 to 18 to book slots for a COVID-19 test even if they display no symptoms. There has been fantastic take up of this offer over the weekend and we are working with the government and Public Health England to identify more suitable sites. There have been calls for the council

to shut local schools but this is not a decision for the council and rests on the shoulders of the local academy head teachers. But whilst this appears a simple solution it would have a further impact on the local economy with parents having to take more time off to look after children normally in school this week.

We must now all play our part at all times and do everything we can to drive the rate of infection back down again as we have done before. The actions we must take are to follow **hands, face, space** advice, stay alert for symptoms and be ready to self-isolate if we feel any of them or are told to by NHS Test and Trace. By following these simple rules and acting responsibly, we can reduce the risk to ourselves and to others and halt the spread of the virus.

By following the rules and staying alert to the dangers posed by COVID-19 we will all be saving lives and doing everything we can to ensure the borough is moved to a lower alert level as quickly as possible.

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## Know the rules and guidance for tier 3 – Very High alert

In tier 3, some of the key rules you must adhere to are:

- you must not meet socially indoors or in most outdoor places with anybody you do not live with, or who is not in your support bubble. This includes in any private garden or at most outdoor venues
- you must not socialise in a group of more than six in some other outdoor public spaces, including parks– this is called the ‘rule of six’
- hospitality settings, such as bars pubs, cafes and restaurants are closed – they are permitted to continue sales by takeaway but outdoor seating must also close
- accommodation such as hotels, B&Bs, campsites, and guest houses must close, with some exceptions
- indoor entertainment and tourist venues must close, including play centres, bingo halls and bowling alleys
- leisure and sports facilities may continue to stay open, but group exercise classes should not go ahead.

- there should be no public attendance at spectator sport or indoor performances and large business events should not be taking place. Elite sport events may continue to take place without spectators
- places of worship remain open, but you must not attend with or socialise with anyone outside of your household or support bubble while you are there, unless a legal exemption applies
- avoid travelling outside of your area, including for overnight stays other than where necessary, such as for work, education, youth services, to receive medical treatment, or because of caring responsibilities

## Families of 11 to 18 year olds urged to get COVID-19 tests

New drive through COVID-19 test centres are now open in Thurrock so that all parents and carers of children aged 11 to 18 can get their whole family tested for COVID-19 before Christmas.

Whether you have symptoms or not, you should book a test for as soon as possible. If you are displaying symptoms of COVID-19 it's important that you go straight back home and continue to self-isolate until you get your test result.

### How do I book a test?

Go to the government website [www.gov.uk/get-coronavirus-test](https://www.gov.uk/get-coronavirus-test) where you will be asked a series of questions.

- choose NO to essential worker
- choose NO to having symptoms
- choose NO to being part of a trial or pilot



Then select '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'.

You can book additional family members through one form by choosing 'add family members'.

There are three drive through COVID-19 test centres for 11 to 18 year olds and their families operating in Thurrock in:

- Grover Walk, Corringham
- Crown Road, Grays
- Tilbury Cruise Terminal Car Park

We know that there has been some congestion around these sites over the weekend so we ask that you please avoid the testing locations unless attending for a test and leave the location once tested.

#### **What if I can't get to a drive through centre?**

You can ask to receive your test by post. You can do this when making your booking by answering 'Yes' to 'Is the person who needs a test part of a trial of government pilot project' and selecting 'The person is taking part in community testing'.

You should also select this option if there is no availability at a testing centre within a reasonable journey of your home.

#### **Why is this testing only available to families with children aged 11 to 18?**

The highest number of overall COVID-19 positive tests in Thurrock is currently in this age group, so testing those who may have the virus but do not have symptoms helps to halt its spread in our community.

#### **What if my family is already self-isolating?**

You can still get tested if you've been asked to self-isolate for 10 days by the NHS Test and Trace Programme or by our own Public Health team, but you must complete your period of self-isolation, even if you test negative.

Find out more at [www.thurrock.gov.uk/coronavirus-test](http://www.thurrock.gov.uk/coronavirus-test)