



WALTON HIGH

Leading Learning

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23 December 2020

Dear Parents

COVID-19 Update 28

I thought Update 27 was going to be the last letter for 2020 – how wrong I was!

Since last Thursday, much has been reported and I thought it would be helpful to try to bring some clarity.

Will schools be open in the first week of January?

Who knows! As I am sure you are aware, much to many people's frustration and annoyance, the Government is giving out mixed messages.

The official position is that from Tuesday, 5 January schools will be open to students in Years 11 and 13 only, with all other years having remote learning until Monday, 11 January.

The guidance that was sent to schools after they closed for the Christmas holiday states that the students in school that first week are to be kept in a consistent bubble and are not to do PE. Given these year groups do not have the same timetable due to the range of subjects they study, for their learning to be meaningful we will continue with the approach we currently have in place for limiting the number of close contacts students have in lessons.

Statements made by politicians indicate that schools may not re-open as planned. The Prime Minister said in his press conference on 21 December that whether or not schools open in January will "follow the path of the pandemic" and that he will be "keeping things under constant review". The Department for Education has also advised that it has purchased an additional 400,000 laptops to support remote learning.

There are three likely scenarios in January that parents should plan for:

1. The official position with only Y11 and Y13 in school from 5 January, with all other year groups working remotely until 11 January
2. All year groups working remotely for the first few weeks of the spring term
3. Students attending on a two week rota basis, with each year group divided into two cohorts alternating between onsite and remote learning

It is difficult to predict what the Government will eventually decide to do, as political expediency will also have a part to play.

Will my child have to have a COVID-19 test before they return to school?

As mentioned in Update 27, schools have been asked to facilitate lateral flow tests for all staff and as many students as possible in the first week of term, including those working remotely. Schools are not obliged to take part in this programme. However, despite the limitations of the lateral flow tests and the additional workload this will create, Walton High believes it is in the interests of the school and wider community to participate. This is especially the case given the high rate of infection locally ([Annex A](#)).

After this initial phase of testing, the Government wants staff to be routinely tested on a weekly basis and, to avoid the need for close contacts to self-isolate, serial testing over seven consecutive school days offered to both staff and students if they have had contact with a positive case.

All testing is voluntary and parental consent is required for all students under the age of 16. Students who are 16 and over need to give their own consent.

All tests will be self-administered.

As you can imagine, with over 2,500 students and 260 staff, it will be a significant challenge to get through all the people who consent to a test in the first week of term and to then re-test everyone who tests negative a second time within three to five days as requested by the Government.

As yet, nothing has been delivered to schools and after today both of Walton High's sites will be closed until 4 January. As the DfE's own guidance states "*Over Christmas schools' responsibilities for contact tracing end on 23 December, meaning teachers should be able to get the break that they deserve before resuming work in the new term.*" we will not be doing any work on this until January. Apparently, the armed forces are on standby to help schools plan. However, it is not help with planning that we need, school leaders are actually very good at this, but additional staff to avoid us having to redeploy people away from their core role of supporting learning and teaching to running a COVID-19 test centre.

I will write again on 4 January to update parents on our plans together with further information about the tests and a consent form.

Do I still need to contact the school if my child tests positive?

Schools' responsibility for tracing and asking close contacts to self-isolate ends today, so there is no need to contact the school to advise us if your child tests positive. However, it is useful for us to know the number of students who have tested positive therefore parents should continue to use the covid19@mket.org.uk email address for this purpose. Please do not call the school and leave a message or use mail@ or feedback@.

Thank you for your continued support.

Wishing all our families the very best for 2021.

Kind regards



Michelle Currie
Executive Principal



Annex A

22 December 2020 at 4:00pm

Cases in Milton Keynes ▾

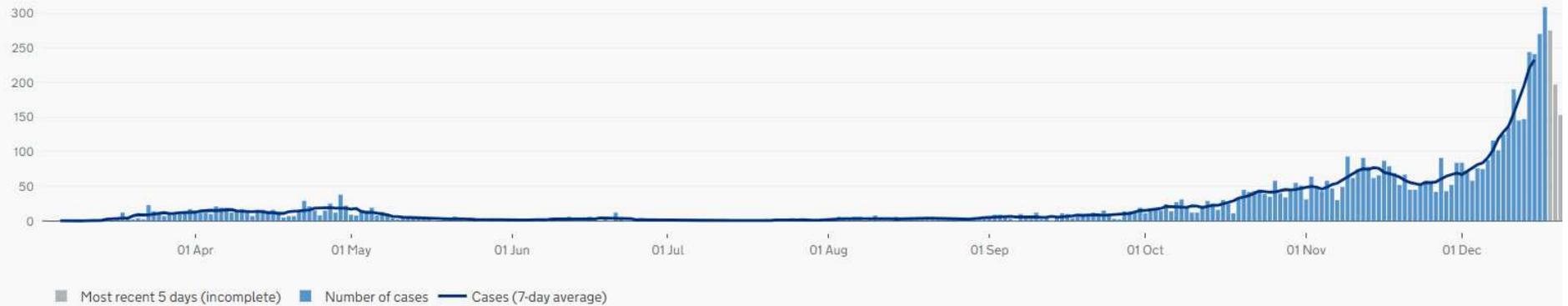
People tested positive

Daily	Total
334	7,061

Cases by specimen date

Number of people with at least one positive COVID-19 test result (either lab-reported or lateral flow device), by specimen date. Individuals tested positive more than once are only counted once, on the date of their first positive test. Data for the period ending 5 days before the date when the website was last updated with data for the selected area, highlighted in grey, is incomplete.

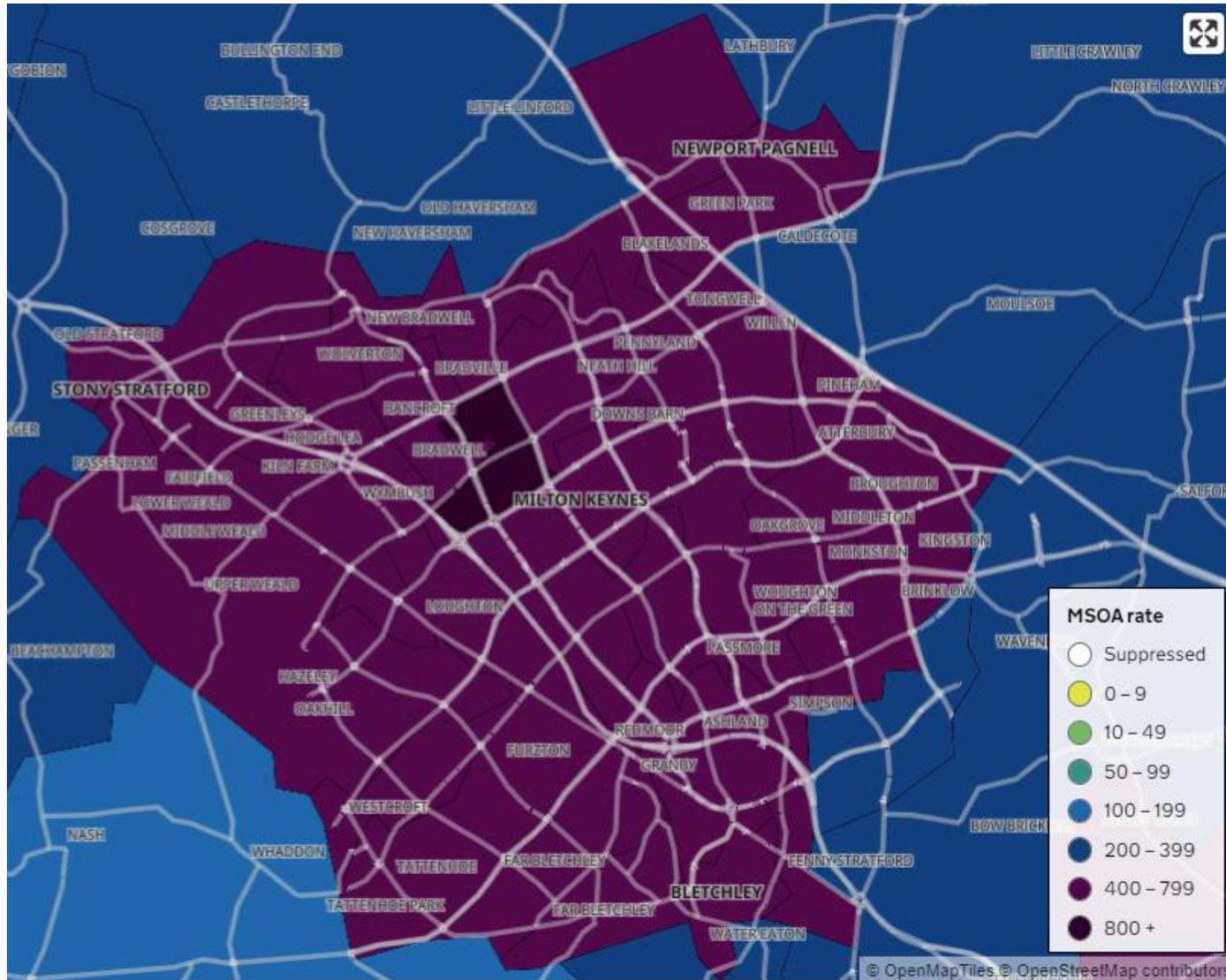
Daily Cumulative Data About



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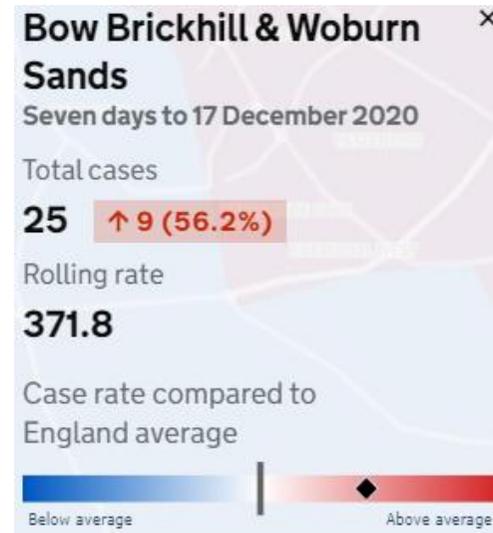
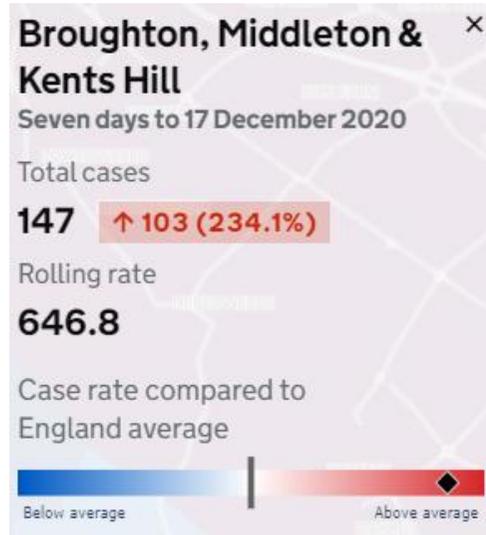
Enabling - Enhancing - Enriching

Seven-day rolling rate of new cases by specimen date ending on 17 Dec 2020



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Enabling - Enhancing - Enriching



Cases

People tested positive in Milton Keynes

Latest data at local authority (upper tier) level provided on 22 December 2020

Daily

334

Last 7 days

1,750 ↑ 830 (90.2%)

▶ Rate per 100k resident population: **573.7**

Deaths

Deaths within 28 days of positive test in Milton Keynes

Latest data at local authority (upper tier) level provided on 22 December 2020

Daily

4

Last 7 days

20 ↑ 7 (53.8%)

Healthcare

Patients admitted in Milton Keynes University Hospital

Latest data at healthcare trust level provided on 15 December 2020

Daily

5

Last 7 days

70 ↑ 5 (7.7%)