

22 May 2020

Dear parent/carer,

We are writing to you to update you on plans for children returning to schools following the Prime Minister's announcement on Sunday 10 May that schools may be re-opening for certain children from start of June. Since this announcement the Council has been working with the city's schools to agree measures so that more children can begin to go back to their schools to continue their learning in a safe and gradual way.

This letter sets out the approach that has been developed with schools. **The most important principle for us is that the health, safety and welfare of children, staff and our communities is paramount.**

Why is it good for children to start going back to school?

- It is good for children's mental well-being
- School is the best environment for children to learn in
- It is important for children to learn to socialise with others, especially for younger children
- Some children will be moving on to secondary school next year, and others are moving into important exam years. It is important that schools can help children and young people to prepare for these events.

Is my child eligible to go back to school?



Children in these year groups **can go back to school.**



Nursery

Reception

Year 1

Year 6

Year 10

Year 12

Children of key workers, with a social worker or with a EHCP



Children in these years will **continue to remain at home** until Government guidance changes

Year 2

Year 3

Year 4

Year 5

Year 7

Year 8

Year 9

Year 11

When will eligible children go back to school?

The Government has said that it will make a decision about schools re-opening by Thursday 28 May, and they will only open if it is safe for this to happen.

Schools will be preparing their sites for more pupils to return over half term. Most primary schools will have a training day on Monday 1 June so that they can brief their staff about risk assessments and new processes in place to promote safety.

Pupils in the eligible year groups will be able to gradually return to school during the first two weeks of June. Schools will tell you when your child can return to school.

For children and young people at special schools, your child's school will talk with you and use a risk assessment to decide which pupils should return and when they should go back to school.

Will children be in school full-time?



So that as many children as possible can go back to school in a safe way, many schools will need to limit the number of children attending each day. This means that schools may have children in on some days of the week and provide support for your child to learn at home on others. Your child's school will tell you which days your child can go to school.

Children who have a parent or carer who is key worker should still be able to go to school every day if this is necessary.

Is it safe for my child to go back to school?



We have made our plans for children going back to school taking advice from experts in public health and health and safety, as well as school leaders, teaching unions and the Government.



Throughout the lockdown period, our schools have safely remained open for children of key workers and other children.



Before more children return, each school will complete a risk assessment that shows what steps it is taking to promote the safety of pupils and staff, and to limit the risk of transmission of coronavirus.



Everyone in schools will follow strict hygiene guidelines. Children and adults will wash hands regularly throughout the day. Classrooms and equipment will be cleaned before they are used by a new group of children.



Children will be taught in much smaller groups (usually less than 10 pupils). They will remain in a 'bubble group', staying with that group throughout the day to minimise contact with other children or adults.



Drop-off and pick-up arrangements, play times and lunch times may be altered to minimise contact between different groups of children and to support social distancing.



If a child or someone they live with becomes sick they will not be able to attend school. If a staff member is unwell they will not be in school. If anyone shows symptoms of coronavirus they will need to self-isolate in line with government guidelines.

Your child's school will be able to tell you in more detail about the changes they are making so that it is safe for your child to return.

Will school staff be wearing PPE (personal protective equipment)?

Health advice is that people working in schools do not need to use PPE, unless they would usually do so, for example if it was necessary to meet a child's personal care needs. If a child developed coronavirus symptoms in school, they would be isolated from other children in the school and supervised by an adult who would have the necessary PPE, until the child can be collected.

Will children going back to school be able to be tested for coronavirus?

Children who do not have coronavirus symptoms do not need to be tested. If your child has symptoms and is over the age of 5 they can be tested at one of the national testing sites. To access testing, parents will be able to use the 111 online coronavirus service if their child is 5 or over. Parents will be able to call 111 if their child is aged under 5 for advice. **If your child has coronavirus symptoms they must not go to school.**

Does my child have to go back to school?

If your child is eligible, they should go back to school. However, if you decide not to send your child to school the Government have made it clear that **you will not receive a fine.**

If your child has a health condition that means that they have received a letter advising to shield, they are not expected to go to school. For other clinically vulnerable children, you should follow medical advice about whether they should attend school.

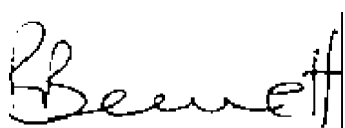
What should I do if my child is worrying about going back to school?

Talk to your child in a positive way about school, seeing friends and teachers again. Help them to understand how social distancing works and make sure that they can wash their hands properly by themselves. Let them know that school may seem a bit different, but their teachers are doing everything to make sure that it is safe.

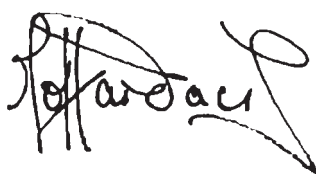
We hope that this letter provides useful information and reassurance about the steps that Wolverhampton schools are taking so that pupils can return safely if the Government decides that this should happen.

If you have any questions about what will be happening for your child, please contact your child's school directly about these.

Your sincerely,



Emma Bennett
Director of Children's Services



Councillor Dr Michael Hardacre
Cabinet Member for Education and Skills