**FAQs**

**Which years groups can start to return to school from 1 June 2020?**

The Government has asked that schools start the phased return of Y12, Y10, Y6, Y1, Rec and Nursery children in mainstream schools. In special schools and hospital schools there is no fixed expectation of year groups but is based on an assessment of the child/young person’s needs. In secondary aged alternative provisions such as Sandwell Community School, the phased return is for Yr. 10 and Yr.11 pupils.

Schools will manage this gradually and not all children will be in school full time as they are limited by space and staffing availability. Schools will write to parents to let them know what the arrangements are.

**What about Key Worker children and vulnerable children?**

Schools will continue to prioritise these children ahead of all others. This may limit the spaces available to children in some year groups.

**What about children / young people with an EHCP?**

Schools will have completed an individual risk assessment for each child. This will be used to make a decision on whether it is safe for your child to return to school or whether they will be safer at home. Schools will talk with you directly to discuss your child’s needs.

**Will my child be in school full time?**

Key Worker children and vulnerable children will continue to be offered full time places in Primary, secondary and special schools. All other children will be on a phased return. In many schools this is unlikely to be a full-time place due to space and staffing availability and schools will offer places for priority year groups / children first. Schools may have to operate a rota system for children to accommodate them across the course of a school week.

**What about transport?**

The way the local authority transports pupils to school has been altered in line with social distancing and good hygiene guidelines. The numbers of pupils travelling in a mini bus have changed in order provide adequate space between the passengers (2 pupils in a 9-15 seater minibus and 3-4 pupils in a 16+ seater minibus). Cars will transport 1 pupil. The travel assistance team has produced a set of guidance around the changes to explain this further.

If parents would prefer to transport their child in their own vehicle, rather than the one provided by the LA, they can receive parental mileage payments.

**What happens if I don’t want to take up the school place?**

Your school will write out to you to ask you if you would like to take a school place from 1st June. You do not have to accept the place. If you don’t accept the place it will be offered to a pupil in another priority group. If you change your mind then you must give your school at least one week’s notice as they may have to make staffing changes to accommodate extra children.

**Will I get fined for not sending my child to school?**

You do not have to send your child to school during this pandemic. There are no plans to fine parents of children who do not attend at the present time.

**How will schools keep children safe?**

Schools are following national guidance produced by the Department for Education and Public Health England. They will operate social distancing (where possible), keep children in small groups throughout the day, increase cleaning schedules and ask children to follow more stringent hygiene routines. Schools may also stagger the start and finish of the school day to reduce the number of adults arriving and departing at the same time.

**Is it possible to manage the youngest children to follow social distancing rules?**

The Government accepts this is very difficult. Young children naturally want to play and work together. Initially, and for as long as is necessary, children will only be able to interact with a small group of other children. Schools will do their best given the space and resources they have available to manage children.

**What happens if my child has special needs?**

Schools will have completed an individual risk assessment for each child. This will be used to make a decision on whether it is safe for your child to return to school or whether they will be safer at home. Schools will talk with you directly to discuss your child’s needs.

**Will teachers and staff have to use PPE?**

If social distancing can be managed then staff will not generally use PPE. If a child becomes unwell and is displaying symptoms of COVID-19, staff will have to isolate that child from others and use PPE to protect themselves. In some circumstances, for example where a child needs personal care or has specific additional needs, staff may use PPE whilst they support a child.

**My child is worried about coming back to school, how can I help them?**

Talk to your child in a positive way about school, seeing friends and teachers again. Help them understand how social distancing works and if possible, make sure that they can wash their hands properly by themselves. Use social stories and visuals to help them prepare for the transition. Discuss strategies to support their preparation to return with their class teacher.

**Will schools be teaching their normal curriculum when children return?**

No. Schools will initially focus on ensuring children feel safe and anxiety free. They will deliver a curriculum designed to support children back in to school routines and classroom learning. Teachers will use this time to work out what learning support children need and how they can support them further.

**Will schools continue to set work or activities for children at home?**

Schools will continue to provide some remote learning or activities for children to do at home. This will vary from school to school depending on whether they operate, for example, an online learning platform or have a website with suggested learning activities or provide you with paper-based activities / equipment.