

SENDiass



Returning to Education in September

The spread of COVID-19 has affected all of our lives, including our children and young people. The partial closures of education settings across England has meant that children and young people have been receiving significantly reduced educational provision; in some cases, children and young people may not have received any educational provision.



The UK Government have set out their plans for children and young people in England returning to their education settings, full-time, from September 2020.

We understand that parents and carers may have queries, worries and apprehensions about their children and young people with SEND returning to their education settings on a full-time basis.

SENDiass4BCP have created this guide to provide accurate information and advice to parent carers about their child or young person's return to their education setting. The guide draws on the latest relevant Government guidance, which was correct at the time of writing.

It includes key points of the Government guidance, a deeper insight into the guidance, and some top tips for parent carers to consider about their child or young person returning to their education setting.



If you require information, advice or support in respect of your child or young person's SEND and their education, health, or social care provision, you can self-refer to SENDiass4BCP by emailing sendiass@bcpcouncil.gov.uk

An overview of the [Government Guidance for the full reopening of schools](#) for England:



The Government have provided guidelines to education settings on how they can minimise the risks of the transmission of COVID-19.

Key points o The Government have provided guidelines to education settings on how they can minimise the risks of the transmission of COVID19

- o They have also provided guidance on what procedures settings should follow if a pupil, staff, or other member of the school experiences COVID-19 symptoms and/or tests positive for the virus
- o The Government have advised that PPE is not necessary in education settings, but that there may be some situations where PPE is recommended (for example, if a staff member is delivering personal care to a pupil)
- o All education settings should undertake a COVID-19 risk assessment



All pupils must be attending their education setting on a fulltime basis from September 2020, unless this is not in their best interests (e.g. medical needs)

- The Government are reintroducing penalties and legal action if parent/carers fail to ensure their child attends school



Special educational provision should be arranged and delivered as usual – there may be circumstances where more careful planning is needed to ensure this can be carried out as safely as possible

Minimising risks o You should speak to your child or young person's education setting for specific details about how they are planning to minimise the risks in their setting from September 2020.

This is because the Government have said that it's for education setting leaders to make informed decisions and judgements about how best to minimise the risks in their setting and how best to deliver the curriculum.

- o Education settings may be notifying all parent carers of these plans as a matter of course; but if you do have any questions, do ask your child's setting. It is understandable to feel anxious about your child or young person returning to their setting, and schools/settings should work with you to listen to you and aim to resolve any concerns you may have.



Allschools should complete a COVID specific risk assessment to determine how they will minimise the risk of transmission.

- o You could also ask if the education setting would be willing to provide you with a copy of their COVID-19 risk assessment, if this has not already widely published to parent/carers from the setting. The Government guidance suggests that schools should share their risk assessment(s) with parent/carers, in the spirit of transparency.
- o The Government have set out the following steps as part of preventing the transmission of COVID-19 in education settings:

- 1) *minimise contact with individuals who are unwell by ensuring that those who have coronavirus (COVID-19) symptoms, or who have someone in their household who does, do not attend school*
- 2) *clean hands thoroughly more often than usual*
- 3) *ensure good respiratory hygiene by promoting the 'catch it, bin it, kill it' approach*
- 4) *introduce enhanced cleaning, including cleaning frequently touched surfaces often, using standard products such as detergents and bleach*
- 5) *minimise contact between individuals and maintain social distancing wherever possible*
- 6) *where necessary, wear appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE)*

Numbers 1 to 4 must be in place in all schools, all the time.

Number 5 must be properly considered, and schools must put in place measures that suit their particular circumstances.

Number 6 applies in specific circumstances.

- They have also identified the following steps as the response to any infection:

- 7) *engage with the NHS Test and Trace process*
- 8) *manage confirmed cases of coronavirus (COVID-19) amongst the school community*
- 9) *contain any outbreak by following local health protection team advice*

Numbers 7 to 9 must be followed in every case where they are relevant.

The above steps are set out in further detail in the Government's guidance to returning to school, which you can find [here](#).

Attendance



From September 2020 it is once again a legal requirement for children and young people to attend school full-time. Parent/carers will be penalised if they fail to ensure their child regularly attends school.

- However - where children or young people are unable to attend their education setting at all, due their parent/carer following clinical and/or public health advice, absences will not be penalised.
- If your child or young person has a special educational need or disability that prevents them from safely attending school on a fulltime basis, you should discuss their needs with the school SENCO and any other relevant staff members (e.g. pastoral care, senior leadership), and work together to develop a suitable support plan for your child which works in their best interests. You should also consider seeking advice from a relevant medical professional.
- The Government has made it clear that education settings should not use 'rotas' for pupils' attendance as a way of minimising risk.
- As under usual circumstances, part-time timetables (sometimes called reduced timetables) should only be used in exceptional circumstances, dependent on the pupil's individual need.

The guidance for [School Attendance \(August 2020\)](#) confirms that an example of an exceptional circumstance may be:

“where a medical condition prevents a pupil from attending fulltime education and a part-time timetable is considered as part of a re-integration package. A part-time timetable must not be treated as a long-term solution. Any pastoral support programme or other agreement must have a time limit by which point the pupil is expected to attend full-time or be provided with alternative provision.

In agreeing to a part-time timetable, a school has agreed to a pupil being absent from school for part of the week or day and therefore must record it as authorised absence.”

Provision o The law around the duty of schools to use their *best endeavours to secure special educational provision* (section 66 of the Children and Families Act, 2014) remains unchanged. This means that the special educational provision that your child or young person requires (i.e. the support in place for them that is different from/additional to what their peers receive) should still be in place.

As under usual circumstances, if you have concerns about the provision in place for your child or young person’s special educational needs or disability, you should speak with their education setting about this.



If your child has an education, health, and care plan: as of the 31st July 2020, local authorities once again have a legal duty to ensure the provision in their plan is being secured/arranged.

- The provision in your child or young person's EHC plan should revert back to being fully implemented. If there are any concerns about how certain provisions can be safely provided, local authorities, schools and relevant external professionals should work together closely to resolve this.
- Where a class, group or small number of pupils need to self-isolate, or there is a local lockdown requiring pupils to remain at home, the Government expect schools to have the capacity to offer immediate remote education.



Whilst it has been made clear that maintaining a two-metre distance in education settings would be ideal, the government are aware that this cannot always be the case. They have said in cases where a two-metre distance is not practicable or achievable, and a pupil requires closer supervision, this should be carried out as normal in order for their education/health care needs to be met.

Top tips

- You may find it helpful to read the [Government's guide for parent carers on the re-opening of education settings](#).
- If your child or young person attends a specialist setting, you may find it useful to read the [guidance for the full opening of special schools and other specialist settings](#).

- You could also read the full Government guidance: [Guidance for full opening: schools](#). This guidance applies to primary, secondary (including sixth forms), infant, junior, middle, upper, school-based nurseries and boarding schools.
- If your young person is attending a post-16 setting, you can find guidance [here](#) on what further education colleges and providers will need to do from the start of the 2020 Autumn Term.
- If you are concerned about your child or young person's transition back into school, speak with their class teacher and other relevant staff members – for example, the SENCO, and/or pastoral staff. You can tell them your concerns and they should work with you to put together a plan of how to support your child's transition back into school. This could include, but is not limited to:
 - Access to supportive resources in the classroom (e.g. sensory equipment, a transition object from home)
 - Pastoral support
 - Social Stories about returning to school
 - Visual resources including timetables and/or now & next board
 - Small group emotional/social support (e.g. Nurture Groups, ELSA)
 - Allotted time with a 'key adult' within the school (e.g. "check in's" at lunchtime)
 - In some cases, a phased return to full-time education may be appropriate to consider



You can also support your child or young person to prepare for the transition back into their education setting.

Consider the following tips:

- Talk to your child or young person about the things they enjoy doing at school or things that make them happy about school
- Walk or drive past their education setting in the lead up to their transition back
- Talk to your child or young person about the fun things you have learned together during lockdown – and encourage them to share these with their teacher/key person
- Show your child or young person photographs/videos of their education setting, including photos of their new classroom/teacher if you have these (you can ask their school for these resources if you do not have them)
- o Dorset CAMHS have prepared a helpful webpage, with a wealth of resources, on how a child or young person’s return to school can be supported. You can find it [here](#).

- You may feel that your child or young person would also benefit from external support and advice. Here are a range of organisations and resources that work to support children and young people's mental health, wellbeing and SEND:
 - <https://www.giveusashout.org/> is a text-based service, available 24/7 to both adults and young people.
 - <https://www.kooth.com/> is a web-based service for young people, with moderated support forums, counsellors and support articles.
 - <https://www.the-listening-ear.org/post/free-counselling-for-young-people-in-bournemouth> A local charity offering counselling for young people in need.
 - <https://youngminds.org.uk/find-help/for-parents/parents-guideto-support-a-z/> Young minds parent guides A-Z - site with guidance on how parents can help their children with a wide range of specific mental health conditions, and life events which might be negatively affecting their wellbeing.
 - https://www.dorsethealthcare.nhs.uk/application/files/9515/0063/4379/A_little_book_of_self_help.pdf Self-Harm- A Little Book of Self Help by Dorset NHS.
 - <https://dorsetmind.uk/help-and-support/informationdirectories/helpful-mental-health-resources-by-subject/selfharming-and-self-injury/> is a resource regarding self-harm by Dorset MIND – it provides guidance, research, tools and resources.

- <https://www.autism.org.uk/about/strategies/social-stories-comicstrips.aspx> - The National Autistic Society provide information and links to books, examples and resources in respect of Social Stories and Comic Strip Conversations.

o If you feel like your family require further external and perhaps more intensive support and advice, you could consider self-referring to the Early Help service. You can do this by contacting the new First Response Hub for BCP Council – telephone 01202 735046 or email childrensfirstresponse@bcpcouncil.gov.uk.



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