

West Sussex County Council Phased Return of Schools

We have considered the national guidance and government statements on a phased return for our children in primary, secondary and special schools, including those who attend alternative provision.

It is our view that any phased return to schools needs to be managed safely and the practicalities of that phased return need to be considered carefully against each individual school's risk assessment of what can be managed safely. This will mean that the way schools will manage the reintegration of different teaching and year groups will vary and may not be uniform across our schools. However, our schools and academies are committed to a return but in a phased and safe way from 1st June should the government's criteria be met.

To support our schools, we have agreed some core principles that we believe need to be considered by schools in helping them in this planned return. The phased return will not necessarily mean that all pupils in all specified year groups will be returning from the same starting point. School governors and leaders will need to manage this phasing. We also recognise that the return of Reception children may take different forms and may not be organised through full time placements initially. We are also committed to our most vulnerable, those with EHCPs, the children of key workers continuing to access school places irrespective of their year group. For West Sussex, we are committed to raising the achievement of our disadvantaged pupils and specifically identify this group of children as a priority group in any phased return, particularly where they have been unable to access online support over the last two months. This will mean that the children of some parents who wish to return, may not be able to do so in the short term.

In liaison with representatives from our schools and academies, West Sussex is promoting the following key principles to guide schools and parents in the phased return:

- Any phased return will be linked to each school's individual risk assessment, developed between leaders, governors and with the engagement of staff, to ensure that any phased return is managed safely for both staff and pupils;
- Whole school risk assessments will be kept under review reflecting a changing national and local context;
- Risk assessments will specifically consider risks to staff and individual pupils who may be vulnerable and how these will be mitigated;
- Individual risk assessments will be undertaken with those children and adults with complex needs to ensure that the needs of the individual pupil or a member of staff can be met safely and that their emotional and mental health needs are carefully considered;

- All pupil and individual adult risk assessments will be kept under regular review to reflect any changes in context;
- The priority within any phased return remains for those children who are vulnerable, those with EHCPs, and the children of key workers, irrespective of their year group;
- Due to national research and also the key priority for West Sussex in improving the achievement of our disadvantaged pupils, those who are in receipt of Pupil Premium Grant (PPG), will be considered as a priority group for the phased return in both primary and secondary schools;
- For Reception pupils, in addition to the risk assessment, schools should consider the social and emotional impact of return on our youngest children based on the environment of the school. We support schools, as part of their phased return, to consider part-time education for Reception children, taking into account the following:
 - supporting young children's well-being with a return to something that is unfamiliar may add additional anxiety;
 - staff could be better able to quickly identify those who are in need of additional emotional and educational support;
 - focused activity in early reading, phonics, language and maths alongside outdoor activity will be manageable with a reduced range of resources that can be easily cleaned and available;
 - capacity for the maintenance of places for key worker groups and our vulnerable children could be better protected elsewhere across the school;
 - part-time would be manageable with sufficient additional time for cleaning of classrooms and resources to avoid cross contamination between different groups using the same rooms and equipment;
- For other groups, schools will prioritise and phase the return according to what is manageable within their own context;
- For secondary schools, the vulnerable, those with EHCPs, children of key workers and those who are disadvantaged and have struggled to access learning from home will form a priority for return, irrespective of their year group and the phased return will reflect individual school's contexts;
- Schools within each phase will aim to continue the provision of distanced or online learning support for those who are not yet attending school;
- PPA time will still be provided and this may take the form of providing a designated time within the week where children do not attend except the vulnerable and those of key workers who require childcare but the organisation of this will be in line with each school's individual plans;
- Schools will continue to engage with the parents of children in priority groups and, where relevant, social workers and the Virtual School, to build parental confidence in arrangements in place;
- Beginnings and endings of the school day will be managed in ways that reduce congestion and with consideration given to the practicalities of transport.