

**COVID-19
RETURNING TO
SCHOOL
ADVICE FOR
PARENTS**

28 May 2020

Wiltshire Council

Introduction

We have compiled this short booklet to help you and your child prepare for going back to school. Reception, Year 1 and Year 6 are due to start back at school from 1 June 2020. For Years 10 and Year 12 there will be some face to face time at school during the summer term starting from 15 June. Each school will be developing arrangements that are appropriate for individual schools. Your child's school will let you know the arrangements they have put in place for these year groups - this includes when they can return to school.

The booklet has the latest government guidance at time of going to print but please be aware the guidance is constantly being updated. Your school will advise with specific details for you but we hope you find this useful as a general guide.



WHY CAN MORE CHILDREN GO TO SCHOOL?



- It is good for children's mental wellbeing
- It is good for children to socialise with other children
- School is the best place for them to learn

WHAT HAS CHANGED?

NURSERY ✓

RECEPTION ✓

YEAR 1 ✓

YEAR 6 ✓

KEY WORKERS' CHILDREN ✓

VULNERABLE CHILDREN ✓

From **1 June** schools will welcome back children, but only from Nursery, Reception, Year 1 and year 6. School will still be open for key workers' children and vulnerable children.

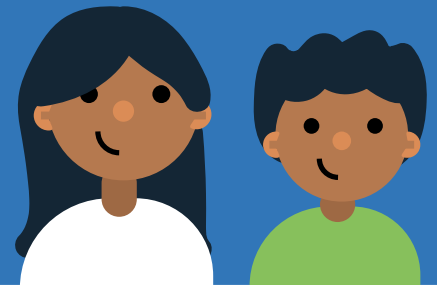


HOW ARE YOU MAKING SURE SCHOOL IS SAFE?

- If a child or family member is sick they cannot attend school
- Everyone will wash their hands regularly
- Schools will be cleaned regularly
- Schools will check for risks before they open
- There will be less children in a room together
- To do this schools may need to make changes to the school day

WHAT ABOUT THEIR BROTHERS AND SISTERS?

- Only children in the year groups above
- Children in years 2 – 5 need to stay at home
- They can keep using their school for home learning materials



DOES MY CHILD HAVE TO COME TO SCHOOL?

- If your child is well and in one of the groups asked to attend they should
- There will be no fines if your child does not go to school



WHAT IF THERE IS A CASE OF CORONAVIRUS IN SCHOOL?

- The person with symptoms must self isolate for seven days
- The people they live with must self isolate for 14 days
- If a child is ill at school they will go home. If they later test positive for coronavirus their group or 'bubble' will need to self-isolate for 14 days



WILL MY CHILD BE TESTED?

Yes, if your child shows symptoms of coronavirus they will be able to be tested. The people they live with must self isolate for fourteen days.



WHAT ELSE MIGHT CHANGE?

- The time you drop off and pick up your child
- Your child may have a different classroom and teacher
- They may not have all their normal lessons
- Your school may change how it serves lunch



Top tips for parents

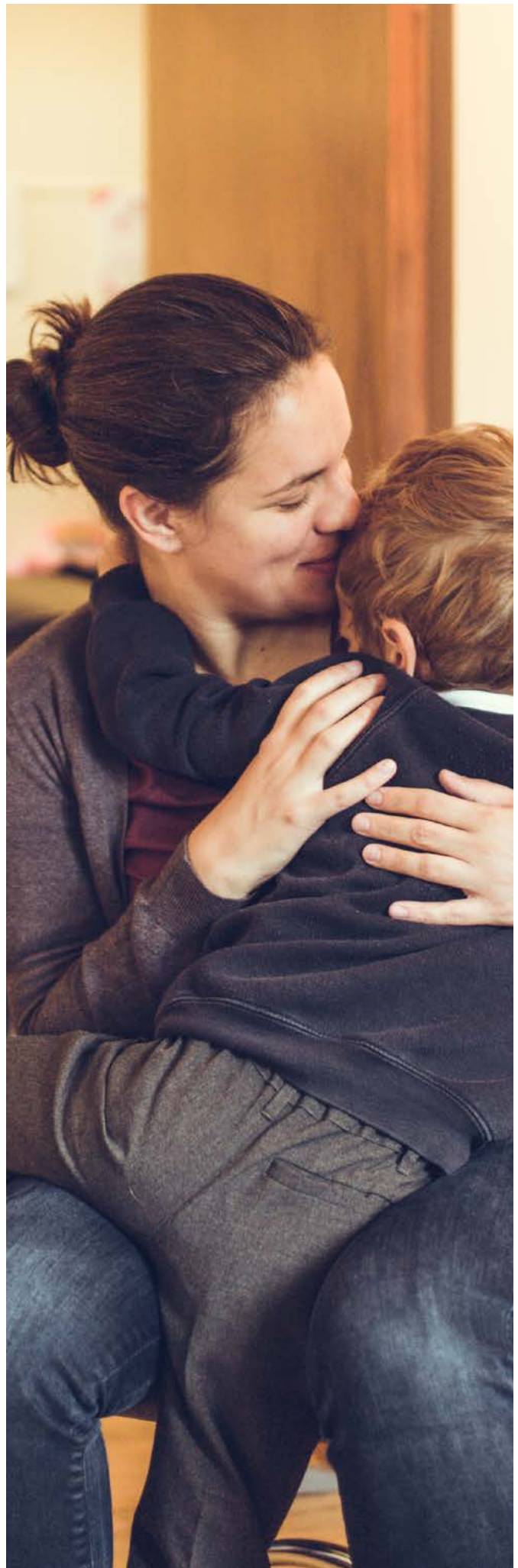
Talk through **why** they have not been at school, explain that things are getting better and it is ok for them to go back to school. Give your child a chance to ask any questions they want to and if you do not know the answer tell them it was a good question and you will find out the answer.

- **Talk about the positives** of going back to school. Ask your child what they are looking forward to doing when they go back to school; who are they looking forward to playing with; what things do they enjoy doing in school.
- **Talk about what you have done** during lockdown – what have you all learned, what new things have you done? What might you say if the teacher asks you what things you have been doing?
- Explain **when** this is going to happen, it's a good idea to talk in "sleeps", e.g. there are 20 more sleeps until you go back to school, consider using a calendar and get them to cross off or colour in the days as they pass. However don't raise children's expectations until the situation is **crystal clear** both from government and schools as to when and how the schools return. A day at a time is a useful motto for the whole family!

- Create **structure, routine and predictability** for your child. In the run up to going back, talk through what you will be doing the night before to get ready for "the first day back" and then spend time talking about what will happen when they wake up on "the first day back". Try to put a routine in place for that morning and keep to it for a while until your child gets back into the swing of things. Get your child to tell you about what they would like the routine to look like
- **Encourage open discussion:** acknowledge that it will be natural to have a mixture of emotions (e.g. excitement at seeing friends, anxiety or worry about what might have changed). These discussions can be less intense when you are doing something together such as cooking/drawing/Lego/playdough/travelling in the car rather than sitting face to face. If your child is feeling **anxious or worried** explain to them that this is ok and lots of other children will be feeling this too. Give your child some time to talk about their worries and be comforted with a cuddle. Remember you don't have to fix this for them, just be there and let them know you understand. Consider using a **worry box** so they can act on their worry, especially before bedtime



- Think about ways for them to connect with their friends before they start back e.g. help them to have a short video call or send a video/voice message to them.
- Once school environment is in place – get an associated visual social story describing how the transition will work, maybe a week at a time depending on individual schools / children
www.starsteam.org.uk/coronavirus-resources is a very useful website for visuals associated with both the coronavirus generally, as well as transitions back to school for children with autism and SEND more generally.
- Be prepared that for some children with SEND where feasible, transitions may be more gradual with more of a mix of home-learning balanced with school attendance. Again visual social stories and language jigs will be key at each step of the way.
- For younger children and those who struggle with separations, **connection objects** are a way for children to know that you are connected and they are being 'held in mind' when you are not together. Both you and your child have the same object. The pair of objects could be: small soft toys, pebbles, shells or anything that a child might be able to keep in their school bag/pocket. Another idea might be to sew a special button on the inside of their school jumper in case they are concerned that their connection object might get lost.
- Related to connection objects, story books such as *The Invisible String* (Patrice Karst) provide reassuring messages that no matter how far away we are from people we love, we are still connected.
- Remember to take children's individual medical circumstances into account and get advice from medical professionals where needed



Frequently asked questions

Are schools re-opening after half term?

Most schools are already open in Wiltshire for the children of critical workers and vulnerable group pupils. We have been encouraging families with social workers to send their children to school as we believe that this is the safest place for them in the widest sense and are grateful to Wiltshire schools who do not want to see children's learning compromised at a very difficult time.

How will schools open differently after half term?

The government has asked Early Years (EY) providers to open for all of their intake from 1 June onwards. Your child's EY provider will let you know when your child can return.

Primary phase has been asked to open more widely to pupils from Reception and Years 1 and 6, where it is safe to do so from 1 June onwards. Your child's school will let you know when your child can return to school.

The government has said secondary school pupils in Years 10 and 12 will have some face to face contact at school in the summer term from 15 June

How are schools preparing to open more widely and how will I know if my child will be getting a place and how to come to school?

All Early Years (EY) settings, primary and secondary schools are risk assessing their sites in relation to the need for social distancing.

They have been asked to prioritise as follows;

- Maintaining the existing offer to vulnerable pupils and key worker children
- Keeping staff and pupils safe by maintaining social distancing where possible and much smaller group sizes
- Adding in other groups as schools are altered to meet these essential components

When they have risk assessed and converted their school site for wider attendance at a safe distance, they will contact you and ask you about your needs and then explain what the changes will mean for you and your child. They will let you know when they are ready for your child to start school again.

Will all children in Year 1 and 6 and Reception be back full time

Your school will accommodate as many pupils as they can safely do so whilst maintaining their existing commitments and the safety of everyone in school.

Will this opening happen on 1st June?

The government has confirmed that they will say whether they believe that it is safe to do so on the 28th May but schools are preparing plans from 1 June. This does not mean that eligible children will all return to school on this date. Your child's school will let you know when your child can start school again.

I am a critical (key) worker how will things change for me and my child?

Schools have been asked to continue to prioritise the children of critical workers, whose parents cannot work from home and vulnerable pupils.

My school has offered me a place for my child but I am afraid of sending them into school.

Schools will only open when they believe it is safe as possible.

The government has said parents should be 'strongly encouraged' to have their children attend. However, parents will not be fined if they choose for their children not to attend school.

How might schools look differently?

Your school will contact you with the details.

How can parents support their child and schools in preparing for increased contact with schools?

- Start to increase the number of times that you encourage your child to wash their hands and practise maintaining social distance.
- Look at how they could walk or cycle to school.
- Read you schools' joining instructions - most will not want parents and other adults on site and will have set out safe entry and exit points.
- Arrive at the time you are asked to attend and don't arrive early or linger later.
- Explain any changes in behaviour policies to your child. Social distancing is really important and although schools and pupils have missed each other, it's important that we keep each other safe.
- Schools will tell you what children can/should wear and whether they can bring any kit or food with them. Make your child aware of any changes.
- Explain that they will be in different groups to March and may have a different class teacher/ TA. This will mean if there is a suspected case of COVID-19 the child will be sent home. If that child then tests positive for COVID-19 the bubble of pupils will be sent home for self isolation.

