

9 June 2020

Dear parent/carer

You will be aware that some Birmingham schools have started reopening to more pupils from this week. The council has been working with schools to agree measures so that more children can begin to go back to school to continue their learning in a safe and gradual way.

The most important principle for us is that the health, safety and welfare of children, staff and our communities is paramount.

Throughout the lockdown period, most of our schools have safely remained open for children of key workers and other children who would benefit most from being in school. We are extremely grateful for the commitment and dedication that has been shown by school staff throughout the coronavirus outbreak.

The government guidance sets out that the children with the highest priority to return to school are

- children of key workers
- children with a social worker and
- children with an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP)

If your child comes under one of these groups and has not been attending school up to now, please contact your child's school to discuss when they can return.

### **Why is it good for children in these groups in particular 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

Many primary schools have started reopening to pupils in Nursery, Reception, Year 1 and Year 6. If your child's school is reopening to pupils in these year groups, they will be sharing information with you about the arrangements they have put in place. Secondary schools will be sharing their plans to engage more pupils in Years 10 and 12, in preparation for exams next year.

For those children that remain at home, schools will be continuing to provide support for home learning.

### **Does my child have to go back to school?**

If your child is in the highest priority group, they should go back to school. However, if your child has a health condition that means that they have received a letter advising them 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.

We are mindful that some families, particularly those in Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic communities, multi-generational families and those with a clinically vulnerable family member, may be concerned about their child(ren) returning to school. In these cases, please contact your child's school to discuss.

If, however, you decide not to send your child to school the Government has made it clear that you will not receive a fine.

### **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.

There is also mental health support available for young people aged 11-25 for online self-referral at [www.kooth.com](http://www.kooth.com). Kooth is linked into the wider mental health support from Forward Thinking Birmingham and offers:

- Online mental health counselling and chat services
- Peer to peer support through moderated discussion forums
- Self-care tools and resources to build resilience
- Early response to and identification of emotional wellbeing and mental health problems
- No waiting lists, referrals or thresholds to access the service.

If you have any questions about what will be happening for your child when they go back to school, please contact your child's school.

Yours faithfully



Dr Tim O'Neill  
Director Education and Skills



Councillor Jayne Francis  
Cabinet Member for Education, Skills and Culture