

News Release

Issued by: Denise Dawson,
Communications Officer

E: denise.dawson@blackpool.gov.uk



087/BC/DD/CS/20

19 August 2020

BLACKPOOL SCHOOLS GOOD TO GO IN SEPTEMBER

Blackpool Council has issued a rallying cry to parents to get ready for the new school year.

The resort's primary and secondary schools will be reopening for the start of the new academic year in September when the usual rules around school attendance will be reintroduced.

Through its new "Back To School Safely" campaign, the council is reminding parents and carers of the vital importance of children returning to school for their education and wellbeing.

The government is planning for pupils in all year groups to return to school and college full time from the beginning of the autumn term.

Working closely with schools, Public Health and the Department for Education, Blackpool Council has been helping to ensure all of the necessary measures are in place to provide a safe and secure environment when schools return to full capacity.

Most of Blackpool's schools have remained open throughout the pandemic, providing a well-managed service to support critical key workers and vulnerable children.

Through its Back To School Safely campaign, parents are being reminded of the measures that will be in place when children and staff return. These include:

- Staggered pick-up and drop-off times and time slots for breaks and lunch times

- Strict cleaning regimes with everyone needing to frequently wash their hands, including when they arrive at school, when they return from breaks, and before and after eating
- Children being asked to stay within their specified group or 'bubble' to help minimise contact and maintain distance from other year groups

Blackpool Council is assisting schools by offering a range of additional practical and advisory support:

- Appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) including gloves, masks, visors and hand sanitisers, screens for reception and dining areas
- Assistance with risk assessments
- Information on availability local testing availability
- Public health advice

Parents and carers are being advised that during the next few weeks they will need to look at what their child requires to get back to school including travel passes, school uniforms and free school meals if eligible.

Cllr Kath Benson, Blackpool Council Cabinet Member for Schools, Education and Aspiration, said: "Whilst things may be a little different and parents and carers may have concerns about sending a child back into the school environment we can offer reassurance that a great deal of work has been undertaken to protect everyone.

"The safety of children, young people and all school staff in Blackpool remains paramount and that is why schools have been working throughout the summer to prepare.

"It is vital that our young people return to school to get a good education to help them in their future lives, for their wellbeing, and for their wider development. Missing out on more time in the classroom puts pupils at risk of falling behind, not seeing their friends and not getting involved in activities. So we urge everyone to start getting ready for the new academic year.

“If parents have any concerns, then they should contact the individual school directly and have a chat through those worries with the teachers or contact the Pupil Welfare Service by emailing pupilwelfareservice@blackpool.gov.uk.

“We thank everyone involved for their efforts in getting our schools ‘good to go’.”

Dr Arif Rajpura, Blackpool Council’s Director of Public Health, commented: “There is clear evidence that the risk to children from COVID-19 infection is much lower than in the general population and that there are negative health impacts for young people by being out of school.

“We continue to see very few new cases of Covid-19 and low levels of community transmission in Blackpool and we are monitoring that situation on a daily basis as society starts to open up.

“It is important to emphasise that we are in daily contact with the relevant government departments and we have a very strong understanding of the measures that need to be in place to create safer environments in our schools.”

Blackpool Better Start, a 10-year lottery funded programme to help children in the town get a better start in life, is also providing practical support to help families prepare for school.

Four-year-olds in the town have missed out on the usual opportunities of visiting their classroom or meeting their teachers, which is why Blackpool Better Start have sent 1,600 packs to every school starter across the town.

The pack contains a specially written book ‘The Sandgown Family Get Ready for School’ and a checklist with advice for families on how they can help their child be school-ready.

Information and advice for parents and carers of children returning to school in September can be found at www.blackpool.gov.uk/BackToSchoolSafely

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