



To:

All Parents & Carers

CHILDREN'S SERVICES AND SKILLS

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Your Ref.

Please ask for: Louise Rees

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Dear Parents and Carers,

RETURNING TO SCHOOL

At the local authority we are continuing to work in partnership with all schools to ensure they are ready to welcome pupils back in September and wanted to update you about arrangements for schools reopening.

We fully understand that as the start of term gets closer, parents and pupils may have some mixed feelings. Although some pupils have been in school up until the end of the summer term, others have not been back since March. The first half of the coming term will be a period of transition for us all. The government has been clear that attendance is now compulsory and all pupils, except those who have been identified as being extremely vulnerable, should attend school full time. If your child is anxious in any way then we encourage you to speak to your school - who will work with you to ease those anxieties and enable your child to return successfully. You may also find the information and support on the [Council](#) webpages helpful, particularly the 'back to school transition guide'. As parents ourselves we do understand that you and your children may be worried and we are here to support you.

Safety measures – how you can help

Schools have taken a number of steps to make sure pupils can return safely. They will have also thoroughly reviewed their health and safety risk assessments and put in place increased health and safety and hygiene measures. We all have a part to play in this. As well as following the arrangements your child's school puts in place, you can also help by:

- Reinforcing with your child the need for good respiratory hygiene, by promoting the 'catch it, bin it, kill it' approach, which schools will also be doing.
- Continuing to wash hands regularly – this remains one of the best preventative measures against the virus.)
- Not sending your child to school if they, or someone in your household, has symptoms of the virus. **Please notify the school immediately in these circumstances.**

- Keeping your child at home if you have returned from a country not on the [exempt list](#) of low-risk countries and need to self-isolate for 14 days (this can change quickly so check it regularly). **Please notify the school with details**
- Taking part in the NHS Test and Trace process **if your child develops symptoms** so that cases can be identified quickly - this means, you should arrange for them to [get a test](#) and let their school know the results. **You can also call 119**, which is the number for the NHS virus testing call centre.

Schools plans, based on Public Health advice, are in place for:

- Managing confirmed cases of the virus
- Making sure that everyone at the school cleans their hands more often than usual
- Extra cleaning arrangements
- Minimising contact and maintaining social distancing, as far as possible. We continue to ask you as families to support schools with this and maintain social distancing outside of school, including the use of face-coverings where appropriate and avoiding any large social gatherings.
- Normally, staff will not be wearing PPE although schools all have supplies to use in the event of a child becoming unwell at school and for when personal care is being provided. Children should not wear face coverings in school.

It is important to support schools by following the advice set out here and also the wider [public health advice and guidance](#).

The arrangements each school makes will be different because no school is the same and plans will differ based on size and layout, the number of pupils, teachers and so on. Schools may have staggered starts, finishes, different lunch and break time arrangements, new hygiene routines and changes to timetables. What they all will have in common is that they are following the protective measures above to ensure your child's school is as safe as possible.

Getting to school

Where possible, children are being encouraged to walk or cycle to school. The return to school after the summer break is always a peak time for traffic congestion and parking problems, so the more families that are able to avoid using the car for the school run, the better. If your child relies on public transport to get to school, and walking or cycling isn't an option, the [safer travel guidance for passengers](#) will apply. We have been working closely with Transport for West Midlands to support them in developing their September plans for the public transport network to try to increase capacity.

If children travel by a school-only bus, rather than on public transport, the guidance for public transport will not apply. Arrangements will be put in place for minimising contact between children on transport, managing getting on and off, cleaning and other hygiene measures. If your child comes to school by taxi, the taxi companies have been asked to take appropriate action to reduce the risk of infection.

What if there is a case or cases at my child's school?

We know that the virus has not gone away and that we must be prepared for things to change quickly. In Solihull we have detailed plans in place to respond to any cases locally and we are

also carefully monitoring developments in our neighbouring councils on a daily basis – we all know that the virus is no respecter of boundaries. The actions schools will need to take in the event of a positive case or cases are mapped out in detail and this information has been shared with your child's school.

Our thanks to you and to our schools

We cannot emphasise enough how proud we are of your child's school and those who lead it. This has been the most challenging of times for so many. At times for schools, it has felt almost impossible, but all schools in Solihull remained open to some pupils over the whole of lockdown, including holidays when this was needed. We do not underestimate how difficult this has been for schools, their leaders and also for you as families – coping perhaps with uncertainties over jobs and income, and supporting your children's learning whilst managing their behaviour, anxieties and how they have been missing their friends. Children and young people leaving their primary or secondary school have missed out on the usual opportunities to celebrate and say their goodbyes. Transition to other schools or further education has also felt very different.

You have lived through five very difficult months but now it is time to start the new school year. As we begin to restore a sense of normality to school life in the borough, we are confident that schools in Solihull have done everything they can to welcome pupils back safely and will be ready to react quickly if the situation changes. However, please do contact your school in the usual way if you do have any questions or concerns.

We hope you enjoy what remains of the summer break and we look forward to continuing to work closely with our schools to welcome your children back in September.

Yours sincerely



Louise Rees
Director of Children's Services & Skills