

My Ref: CW/DC

To: Parents and Carers

Date: 18 May 2020

Dear Parents and Carers

## **Starting the Phased Re-opening of Schools**

You will be aware from the news that the Government has announced the phased reopening for schools from 1 June 2020. In Sandwell, we have been looking at how this will be achieved and have worked with our schools and academies to agree a common approach. Schools have reviewed the requirements for social distancing, hygiene and cleaning required daily as well as organisational changes they may need to make to the school day to open.

June 1<sup>st</sup> is the start of a process for reopening and, initially, not all children will be able to start on a full-time basis. The number of children in a school at any one time will be dictated by the size of the classrooms and the availability of staff. To maintain social distancing normal sized classrooms can only hold 6 - 10 pupils at a time. If your child is in Secondary school then the Government has requested that only those in Year 10 and Year 12 are invited individually or in small groups to begin face to face meetings with staff to assist them with their learning. Each school or academy will devise a rota for children to attend and will contact you to tell you when this will be. In the main, all children will continue to do most of their work from home.

Primary schools have been asked by Government to open to a number of year groups, Nursery, Reception, Year 1 and Year 6. However, due to the space available in each Primary school, it is not possible to accommodate all children from these year groups at the same time. Therefore, Primary schools will prioritise pupils in the following order:

- Vulnerable children
- Key Worker Children
- Reception
- Year 1
- Year 6
- Nursery

Primary schools will inform you of the arrangements they are making and will let you know which days your children can attend school from 1 June. Children in Years 2, 3, 4 and 5 will need to continue to remain at home until Government guidance changes.

Whilst the Government is encouraging families to take up the places offered by schools you can choose to keep your children at home and will not be penalised for doing so at this time. Schools will make every effort to keep children in a safe environment, following Government guidance; however, I need to be clear that schools cannot guarantee there will be no transmission of the COVID-19 virus.

We have included a frequently asked questions sheet with this letter to help you understand the position from 1 June. Schools will contact you shortly to inform you of their individual arrangements.

Yours sincerely,



Chris Ward  
**Director of Education, Skills and Employment**

## **Which years groups can start to return to school from 1 June 2020?**

The Government has asked that schools start the phased return of Y12, Y10, Y6, Y1, Reception and Nursery children. Schools will manage this gradually and not all children will be in school full time as they are limited by space and staffing availability. Schools will write to parents to let them know what the arrangements are.

## **What about Key Worker children and vulnerable children?**

Schools will continue to prioritise these children ahead of all others. This may limit the spaces available to children in some year groups.

## **Which additional children will be prioritised first?**

Secondary schools will manage a timetabled rota for Year 10 and Year 12 pupils to attend. Primary schools will prioritise children in this order:-

- Vulnerable children
- Key Worker Children
- Reception
- Year 1
- Year 6
- Nursery

## **Will my child be in school full time?**

Key Worker children and vulnerable children will continue to be offered full time places in both Primary and Secondary schools. All other year groups will be on a phased return. In many Primary schools this is unlikely to be a full-time place due to space and staffing availability and schools will offer places for priority year groups first. Schools may have to operate a rota system for children to accommodate them across the course of a school week.

## **What happens if I do not want to take up the school place?**

Your school will write out to you to ask you if you would like to take a school place from 1 June. You do not have to accept the place. If you do not accept the place it will be offered to a pupil in another priority year group. If you change your mind then you must give your school at least one week's notice as they may have to make staffing changes to accommodate extra children.

### **Will I get fined for not sending my child to school?**

You do not have to send your child to school during this pandemic. There are no plans to fine parents of children who do not attend at the present time.

### **How will schools keep children safe?**

Schools are following National Guidance produced by the Department for Education and Public Health England. They will operate social distancing (where possible), keep children in small groups throughout the day, increase cleaning schedules and ask children to follow more stringent hygiene routines. Schools may also stagger the start and finish of the school day to reduce the number of adults arriving and departing at the same time.

### **Is it possible to manage the youngest children to follow social distancing rules?**

The Government accepts this is very difficult. Young children naturally want to play and work together. Initially, and for as long as is necessary, children will only be able to interact with a small group of other children. Schools will do their best given the space and resources they have available to manage children.

### **What happens if my child has special needs?**

Schools will have completed an individual risk assessment for each child. This will be used to make a decision on whether it is safe for your child to return to school or whether they will be safer at home. Schools will talk with you directly to discuss your child's needs.

### **Will teachers and staff have to use PPE?**

If social distancing can be managed then staff will not generally use PPE. If a child becomes unwell and is displaying symptoms of COVID-19, staff will have to isolate that child from others and use PPE to protect themselves. In some circumstances, for example where a child needs personal care or has specific additional needs, staff may use PPE whilst they support a child.

### **My child is worried about coming back to school, how can I help them?**

Talk to your child in a positive way about school, seeing friends and teachers again. Help them understand how social distancing works and make sure that they can wash their hands properly by themselves.

**Will schools be teaching the National Curriculum when children return?**

No. Schools will initially focus on ensuring children feel safe and anxiety free. They will deliver a curriculum designed to support children back into school routines and classroom learning. Teachers will use this time to work out what learning support children need and how they can support them further.

**Will schools continue to set work or activities for children at home**

Schools will continue to provide some remote learning or activities for children to do at home. This will vary from school to school depending on whether they operate, for example, an online learning platform or have a website with suggested learning activities.