

My ref: School Re-opening 4
Date: 13th July 2020
Contact: Please contact your school
for more information



To parents/carers of pupils in
Cambridgeshire and Peterborough
Schools

People & Communities
Education Directorate

Dear Parent

I am writing to update you about some of the recent COVID-19 developments affecting schools and to clarify our position with regard to pupils returning in September.

Firstly, may I take this opportunity to thank you for all of your support during the COVID-19 period. I do not underestimate the challenges that busy parents have faced during these last few months. Throughout the lockdown period, school leaders and settings managers have shared with me the difference that your help with home learning has made. It will make it easier for teachers and staff teams to help pupils to catch up, or keep up, with their work when school starts again, for all, in September.

Opening over the Summer Break

The government is not asking schools and settings to remain open over the summer holidays. Schools and settings therefore will not be expected to open for vulnerable pupils and the children of critical workers over this period. Some school leaders and setting managers may continue to offer summer holiday activities over this period and we have given them details of the latest guidance for opening. Providers offering paid childcare or holiday activities will be able to operate over the summer holiday period. Parents should make arrangements with such providers directly.

Recent announcements: schools and the Autumn Term

The government has issued schools and settings with advice about how they can open in September at minimal risk to pupils and to staff, now that the prevalence of COVID has decreased. Current restrictions on class sizes will be lifted, but schools and settings will keep children in class or year group 'bubbles' to minimise the number of daily contacts with others that each pupil has. Protective measures, such as regular cleaning and handwashing, will, of course, continue. Schools and settings, supported by the local authority, are putting rigorous procedures in place to minimise the likelihood of viral transmission, and respond to any positive COVID cases. Testing will be widely available, and schools and settings will alert parents should concerns arise. Appropriate actions will be taken in the case of any outbreak, and remote education will be made available to any pupils who might have to self-isolate.

As throughout this period, every school and settings' approach will be different and will reflect local context and circumstances. Schools and settings will work with the local authority to update their risk assessments and consider carefully their arrangements. This will reduce risk to the lowest reasonably practicable level. The majority of our schools have remained open throughout, so we have already seen that our protective measures and bubbles work. We are now ready to scale this up. Your child's school or setting will advise you about any

changes to routines, including for dropping pupils off and collecting them at the end of the day, or transport to school. If individual schools or settings need to operate phased returns, or to alter the times of the day temporarily, the details of this and the reasons for it will be made clear in advance. The safety of our children, parents and school staff is, and always will be, our number one priority.

Education, Health and Care Plans

Particular consideration will be given to pupils who have Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCP's). The government has put in place interim arrangements to the legislation that has allowed the local authority to implement easements on the duty to provide aspects of an EHCP and make reasonable endeavours to provide as much support as possible. This was put in place to support schools, social care and health services focus on addressing the COVID pandemic. It is expected that this legislation will return to normal expectations and EHCP's will be returned to normal as quickly as possible. However, some services will still need to be retained to support the pandemic, so there may still be a restriction on face to face support provided by health, therapy and other services. All services are working hard to continue to offer as much support as possible and where appropriate offer remote support and interventions. I would like to thank parents of children with EHCP's for their resilience and support. Please make contact with your children's school for specific details on return to school.

Attendance from September

The risk to children of becoming severely ill from COVID-19 is very low and we know there are negative, and sometimes lasting, health and educational impacts for pupils who are out of school and settings for long periods. It is with this in mind that the government's guidance states that pupils will be expected to attend school / setting, as normal, come September. A small number of pupils will still be unable to attend because they are self-isolating and have had symptoms or a positive test result themselves, or because they are a close contact of someone who has COVID-19.

Shielding advice will pause on 1 August, subject to a continued decline in the rates of COVID transmission. This means that those pupils who remain on the shielded patient list can also return to their school or setting, as can those who have family members who are shielding. Some pupils who are not required to shield but who remain under the care of a specialist medical professional may need to discuss their care with that professional before returning to their school or setting. Please advise the school or setting if the guidance you receive is that your child should remain at home. Other than in these exceptional cases, or where a pupil's absence is otherwise authorised, it will be the school or settings' expectation that pupils attend as normal. It is important that you discuss any concerns on attendance with your school as soon as possible to avoid further escalation.

Catch-Up Funding

You may have heard that the government will be providing funding so that schools and settings can provide additional tuition and other support to pupils so that any who have fallen behind can be helped to catch up. At the time of writing, detailed guidance has not been released about this. As soon as it has, we will work with schools to consider the best ways forward.

Can you give a Young Person a Home?

Over a thousand young people in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough have no place they can call home. We want to change that. Foster carers are needed to help support children over 10, teenagers and sibling groups. To find out how you can become a foster carer, go to: www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/fostering and register online or call 0800 052 0078. In Peterborough, go to: www.peterborough.gov.uk/fostering and register online or call 0800 328 8433.

Together with my colleagues in the local authority and academy trusts, we will continue to do all we can to support schools and those who lead them to prepare for September – and beyond. Thank you, again, for everything you are doing to help prepare our pupils to make a strong and safe start. We hope you and your children feel confident about returning in September.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jonathan Lewis', with a horizontal line above it.

Jonathan Lewis
Service Director – Education
Cambridgeshire County Council and Peterborough City Council