



# COVID-19 RETURNING TO SCHOOL ADVICE FOR PARENTS

19 August 2020

**Wiltshire Council**

# Introduction

We have completed this short booklet to help you and your child prepare for returning to school in September.

We hope you find this a useful guide with some general points on what to expect and how you can help your child get ready for returning to full time school.

This booklet has the latest government guidance at time of going to print but please be aware the guidance is being constantly updated.

Your school will be in touch with information directly to you on how your school will operate from the start of term so please look over the information they send to you carefully.



## WHY CAN MORE CHILDREN GO TO SCHOOL?



- It is good for children's mental wellbeing
- It is good for children to socialise with other children
- School is the best place for them to learn

## DOES MY CHILD HAVE TO COME TO SCHOOL?

- Yes, if your child is well they should attend school as normal attendance rules apply



## WHAT HAS CHANGED?

- The amount of coronavirus (COVID-19) has decreased since schools and colleges restricted their opening to most pupils in March
- The NHS Test and Trace system is up and running
- More is understood about the measures that need to be in place to create safer environments in schools
- The scientific evidence shows that coronavirus (COVID-19) presents a much lower risk to children than adults of becoming severely ill
- There is no evidence that children transmit the disease any more than adults



## BACK TO SCHOOL KEY INFORMATION



## HOW ARE YOU MAKING SURE SCHOOL IS SAFE?

- If a child or family member is sick with coronavirus they cannot come to school
- Everyone will wash their hands regularly
- School will be cleaned regularly
- We will check for risks before school is open
- There may be some changes to the school day

## WHAT IF THERE IS A CASE OF CORONAVIRUS IN SCHOOL?

- The person with symptoms must self isolate for ten days
- The people they live with must self isolate for 14 days
- If anyone at school tests positive, the whole class must self isolate for fourteen days

## WILL MY CHILD BE TESTED ?

Yes, if your child shows symptoms of coronavirus they will be able to be tested. The people they live with must self isolate for fourteen days.



## WHAT ELSE MIGHT CHANGE?

- The time you drop off and pick up your child
- Your school will advise if your child is in another class or has another teacher
- They may not have all their normal lessons
- We will change how we serve lunch
- Your school will communicate any other specific changes



## Top tips for parents

Talk through **why** they have not been at school, explain that things are getting better now with the virus and it is safe for them to go back to school. Give your child a chance to ask any questions they want to and if you do not know the answer tell them it was a good question and you will find out the answer.

- **Talk about the positives** of going back to school. Ask your child what they are looking forward to doing when they go back to school; who are they looking forward to playing with; what things do they enjoy doing in school.
- **Talk about what you have done** during lockdown – what have you all learned, what new things have you done? What might you say if the teacher asks you what things you have been doing?
- Explain **when** this is going to happen, it's a good idea to talk in "sleeps", e.g. there are 20 more sleeps until you go back to school, consider using a calendar and get them to cross off or colour in the days as they pass. However, don't raise children's expectations until the situation is **crystal clear** both from government and schools as to when and how the schools return. A day at a time is a useful motto for the whole family!

- Create **structure, routine and predictability** for your child: in the run up to going back, talk through what you will be doing the night before to get ready for "the first day back" and then spend time talking about what will happen when they wake up on "the first day back". Try to put a routine in place for that morning and keep to it for a while until your child gets back into the swing of things. Get your child to tell you about what they would like the routine to look like
- **Encourage open discussion**: acknowledge that it will be natural to have a mixture of emotions (e.g. excitement at seeing friends; anxiety/worry about what might have changed). These discussions can be less intense when you are doing something together such as cooking/drawing/Lego/playdough/travelling in the car rather than sitting face to face. If your child is feeling **anxious or worried** explain to them that this is ok and lots of other children will be feeling this too. Give your child some time to talk about their worries and be comforted with a cuddle. Remember you don't have to fix this for them, just be there and let them know you understand. Consider using a **worry box** so they can act on their worry, especially before bedtime



- Think about ways for them to connect with their friends before they start back e.g. help them to have a short video call or send a video/voice message to them.
- It would be helpful to provide a visual social story describing how transition back to school will work. Throughout August the school may be able to provide details regarding timings, routines, and changes to previously established processes in school.

[www.starsteam.org.uk/coronavirus-resources](http://www.starsteam.org.uk/coronavirus-resources) is a very useful website for visuals associated with both corona generally, as well as transitions back to school for children with autism and SEND more generally Some schools have put videos on their websites to help ease children's anxieties.

Be prepared that for some children with SEND where feasible, transitions may be more gradual with more of a mix of home-learning balanced with school attendance. Again visual social stories will be key at each step of the way

- For younger children and those who struggle with separations, **connection objects** are a way for children to know that you are connected and they are being 'held in mind' when you are not together. Both you and your child have the same object. The pair of objects could be: small soft toys, pebbles, shells or anything that a child might be able to keep in their school bag/pocket. Another idea might be to sew a special button on the inside of their school jumper in case they are concerned that their connection object might get lost.
- Relate to connection objects, story books such as *The Invisible String* (Patrice Karst) provide reassuring messages that no matter how far away we are from people we love, we are still connected.
- Remember to take children's individual medical circumstances into account and get advice from medical professionals where needed



# Frequently asked questions

## Are all schools opening in September to all pupils?

Yes. Your school will have been in touch or will be in contact for arrangements from the start of the term.

## Will it be safe to attend school?

Yes. Your school will have been carefully putting plans in place to be ready for the new term.

All schools will need to have all these plans in place so they can open safely for your child's return. If you have any further concerns you can speak to the school direct.

There is evidence that children are less susceptible to COVID-19 than adults and even when infected, usually only develop a mild infection. There is some evidence that children play a lesser role in transmission than adults and in countries where schools have been open for some time, data suggests that school opening has made little difference to the spread of COVID-19 in the community.

## What can I expect to be different about my school when my child returns?

Your school will be in contact with you directly about the changes they have put in place when pupils return. This will include information on times for attending school, the layout of the school and how the timetable will operate.

## I am worried about sending my child to school can I decide whether they should attend?

School and college attendance will be mandatory from the start of the Autumn term. The legal duty on parents and carers of children of compulsory school age to send their children to school regularly will apply. It is vital that children and young people return to school and college for their educational progress, for their wellbeing, and for their wider development. Parents and carers are strongly encouraged to send their children to school from the day that the child's school is open. We understand parents and children may be anxious about returning. If you have any concerns you can speak to your school direct and find out how the school is preparing.

## My child is very anxious about returning – what support is available?

The return to school allows social interaction with peers, carers and teachers, which benefits wellbeing. In Wiltshire there is support on offer to help you prepare for going back to school.

You can also find help and support in the following ways:

**Oxford Health NHS Foundation Trust - Children and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) Single Point of Contact for advice, consultation and referrals – 01865 903330**

24/7 children's mental health helpline offering advice guidance and support to children, young people and carers

Monday to Friday 9am - 5pm  
Tel: **01865 903777**

Outside of these hours  
Tel: **01865 901000**

[www.oxfordhealth.nhs.uk/camhs/wiltshire](http://www.oxfordhealth.nhs.uk/camhs/wiltshire)

## On Your Mind

Signposts to and delivers early mental health support including self care tools and counselling, run by Barnardo's  
[www.onyourmind.org.uk](http://www.onyourmind.org.uk)

## School Nursing

We are aware that it is a very anxious time and there may be concerns about where to access support in coming weeks should there be school closures or you need to self isolate.

The school nursing service is here to support pupils.

For secondary school age young people:

- Confidential telephone drop-in service Monday to Friday 12-2pm. Any young person that would like to call and speak to a qualified nurse on the end of the phone can call **0300 247 0090** Monday to Friday 12-2pm and speak to them.
- CHAT health text service - text a school nurse for advice or support for any health issues or worries, again this is confidential and you don't need to give your name if you don't want to the number is **07480 635513**

### **Will breakfast clubs and after school clubs be returning?**

Schools are being encouraged to resume breakfast and after-school provision, where possible, from the start of the autumn term. Schools may need to respond flexibly and build this up over time because it will be logistically challenging for schools, particularly for clubs that would normally offer support across year groups, where parents are using multiple providers, or where childminders are picking up/dropping off pupils. Please check with your child's school for details of the arrangements which have been put in place.

### **My child normally uses public transport to attend school. How can I be sure this is safe?**

A range of safety measures have been put in place. Your child will be required to wear a face covering on public transport. We have information available on returning to school on public transport which you can access here [www.wiltshire.gov.uk/transport-covid19](http://www.wiltshire.gov.uk/transport-covid19)

### **My child has dedicated school transport – how can I be sure this is safe?**

A range of safety measures have been put in place. It is strongly recommended that pupils aged 11 and over wear face coverings on dedicated school transport. You can find out how this will operate from September in our booklet which is available here [www.wiltshire.gov.uk/transport-covid19](http://www.wiltshire.gov.uk/transport-covid19)

### **My child is currently shielding, can they attend school?**

Some pupils who are no longer required to shield but who generally remain under the care of a specialist health professional may need to discuss their care with their health professional before returning to school (usually at their next planned clinical appointment). For further information - [read the latest Public Health England guidance on shielding.](#)

### **What should I do if my child is unwell?**

If your child is unwell they should not attend school and you should call the school as normal to let them know your child will be absent.

Your child should not attend school if they have coronavirus (COVID-19) symptoms, or have tested positive in at least the last 10 days.

If your child is unwell and displaying symptoms of coronavirus (Covid-19) then you should contact [NHS Test and Trace](#) and get your child tested.

### **If my child is unable to attend how will their absence be recorded?**

If a child is not well enough to attend school, the parent should contact the child's school as normal to report the absence. The school will then make the decision, in the usual way, as to whether the absence is authorised. Please note that your child's school may require medical information from you in order to authorise the absence. You should contact your child's school to report any absence and to discuss any attendance issues.

Where a pupil is unable to attend school because they are complying with clinical and/or public health advice, schools should be able to offer them access to remote education. In accordance with government guidance, the sessions will not count as absences. You can find more advice from the [Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health's shielding guidance for children and young people.](#)

### **What if my child or another child develops symptoms at school?**

If a child begins to feel unwell with coronavirus (COVID-19) symptoms the school will follow the guidance set out by government. [www.gov.uk/government/publications/actions-for-schools-during-the-coronavirus-outbreak/guidance-for-full-opening-schools](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/actions-for-schools-during-the-coronavirus-outbreak/guidance-for-full-opening-schools)

Ensuring that pupils, staff and other adults do not come into the school if they have coronavirus (COVID-19) symptoms, or have tested positive in at least the last 10 days, and ensuring anyone developing those symptoms during the school day is sent home, are essential actions to reduce the risk in schools and further drive down transmission of coronavirus (COVID-19).

If your child is unwell and displaying symptoms of coronavirus (Covid-19) then you should contact NHS Test and Trace and get your child tested.

### Will I have to provide food for my child?

School and college kitchens should be fully open from the start of the autumn term, and they will provide free school meals and universal infant free school meals as usual for those who are eligible. It is important you check the details with your school.

### Will my child have to wear uniform?

Your school will be in touch to advise you on this.

### How can I support my child to prepare for going back to school?

- Remind your child to wash hands more frequently and to practise social distancing
- If practical consider how they can walk or cycle to school
- Read your school's joining information carefully and share with your child.
- Arrive at the time you are asked to attend and don't arrive earlier or later
- Talk through what the school day may look like

### Are there any online courses available to support myself and my child to prepare for the return to school?

**Family and Community Learning** is offering free courses that can help your child move back to school and help with anxieties and worries they may have and provide advice on how you as a parent can support them.

**Transitions Early Years** - The aims of the course are to identify emotions associated with change – yours and your child's, to look at how to deal effectively with emotions, to understand how to support your child in the transition to primary school and to understand the changes ahead and how to plan for them.

**Transitions (SEN and Anxiety)** – The aims of the course are to identify emotions associated with change, to look at how to deal effectively with emotions, to understand how to support your child in the transition within primary school, building relationships and support structures and to understand the changes ahead and how to plan for them.

**Helping My Child Build Confidence and Resilience** - Explore the reasons why children may find concentrating or being resilient difficult. Discover ways to build children's

concentration and resilience at home. Develop an awareness of how the environment may affect children's concentration. An introduction to understanding about how words can be used to develop children's resilience

**Helping My Child to Prepare Positively for Change** - Explore the reasons why children may find change difficult, Discover ways that children's ability to cope with change positively can be supported at home, Develop an awareness of how visual supports such as visual timetables, calendars/countdowns and social situation stories are used to help children to prepare for change. Find out where to go for further help, advice and support.

**Helping My Child with Anxiety and Worry** - Explore what are anxiety and worry and how they affect the body, behaviour, emotions and thoughts. Discover ways that children's mental health can be supported at home. Develop an awareness of how anxiety and worry can affect learning.

Website: [workwiltshire.co.uk/family-learning/](http://workwiltshire.co.uk/family-learning/)

Email: [familyandcommunitylearning@wiltshire.gov.uk](mailto:familyandcommunitylearning@wiltshire.gov.uk)

Contact Number: 01225 712788