

Back to School September 2020 - Information for parents/carers

We recognise that this has been a very difficult and challenging time for everyone, and we know that many families have been greatly impacted by the coronavirus situation, socially, emotionally and economically. We would like to thank you for your commitment to supporting your children's education at home over the last few months.

The Local Authority is now working in partnership with all schools in Slough to encourage children back into school in September 2020 in line with the government's guidance.

As the COVID-19 outbreak gathered momentum with growing numbers of confirmed cases, the Government made the decision to ask schools to open only to a small number of children at the end of March 2020; vulnerable children and those of keyworkers. This was to reduce the transmission of the virus.

In June 2020 we saw the partial opening of schools to targeted groups of children in line with the lifting of some lockdown measures. Throughout this time the Government made it clear that no parent would be penalised or sanctioned for their child's non-attendance at school.

Now, the circumstances have changed and it is the government's plan that all children and young people, in all year groups, will return to school and college full time from the beginning of the autumn term – September 2020. The government has published guidance explaining what parents and carers need to know about their children's education provision in the autumn term¹.

It is vital for all children to return to school for their educational progress, for their wellbeing and for their wider development. We know that some children will have missed being with their friends and the wider social aspects of school.

School attendance is therefore compulsory again from the beginning of the autumn term. This means from September 2020 the usual rules on school attendance apply including;

- **parents' duty to send their child to school regularly where they are of compulsory school age and registered at a school;**
- **schools' responsibilities to record attendance and follow up absence;**

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/what-parents-and-carers-need-to-know-about-early-years-providers-schools-and-colleges-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-outbreak/what-parents-and-carers-need-to-know-about-early-years-providers-schools-and-colleges-in-the-autumn-term#welcoming-children-and-young-people-back-to-school-and-college>

- **the facility for local authorities to use legal sanctions, including penalty notices and prosecution in court to enforce attendance.**

There will however still be a small number of pupils that will be unable to attend due to reasons relating to the incidence or transmission of coronavirus (COVID-19). The government has provided the following examples:

- they are self-isolating and have had symptoms or a positive test result themselves
- they are a close contact of someone who has coronavirus (COVID-19)
- they are self isolating as a result of being in quarantine
- they are clinically extremely vulnerable **and** a local lockdown is in force.

If your child is unable to attend school for any of these reasons you should immediately inform the school and be prepared to provide evidence eg from a clinician. Your school should immediately provide home education. In these circumstances only the absence will not be penalised.

If you are worried about your child attending school you should discuss your concerns directly with the school who will be able to assure you of the measures that have been put in place to reduce the risks in line with government guidance. Schools work closely with health and council teams who may also be able to help if needed.

Parents should plan any family holiday within the school holidays and avoid taking their children out of school during term time. In addition, careful consideration should be given to removing your children from school during term time for “family emergencies”. It is not always appropriate or in the best interests of the child to miss school for emergencies which are being dealt with by adult family members.

The most important thing is that the school and parents work together to get children back into school. The school is ready to listen so please contact them if you have any worries and they will try to help you.

We wish you and your children all the best for the coming academic year.

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