HM Government

Returning to primary school: what parents need to know

From the autumn term, all children in England will return to school full-time.

We're doing everything we can to ensure your children are safe and happy at school.

Why are children going back to school now?

School is the best place for children to learn and for their overall wellbeing. It gives them a routine and helps them develop their social skills. They also get to see their friends and teachers. It is vital that all children return to school in the autumn. Attendance will be mandatory again from the beginning of the new term. The prevalence of coronavirus (COVID-19) has decreased since schools and colleges restricted their opening to most pupils in March.

Is it safe for my child to return to school?

Public Health England (PHE) is clear that the risk of catching coronavirus (COVID-19) is low if schools apply a system of stringent controls to reduce the risk of spreading the virus. This includes regular handwashing and cleaning measures.

We are advising schools and parents to make sure that anyone with symptoms does not attend. The chance of children becoming severely ill from the virus is also very low.

Do children transmit coronavirus (COVID-19) more than adults?

No. Children are no more likely to transmit the virus than adults. In fact, there is reasonable evidence that primary school age children have a significantly lower rate of infection than adults, although this is not yet conclusive.

Will my child be expected to socially distance in primary school?

We understand that young children find it hard to socially distance. To reduce risk, we are currently advising primary schools to create small groups, or 'bubbles', of children, with no mixing between bubbles. We realise some siblings are likely to be in different bubbles. However, we know that it still helps to reduce risk by keeping groups as separate as possible in school.

What should I do if my child or someone in my household has symptoms?

It's important that if your child (or anyone in their household) has any coronavirus (COVID-19) symptoms, they do not attend school and stay at home. You should arrange for them

to get a test and tell your school the test results. This will help the NHS Test and Trace process. If you have a positive test result, your household should remain at home and follow the Test and Trace self-isolation guidance.

What happens if there is an outbreak in my child's school or my local area?

If there is an outbreak at the school, local health protection teams will work with the school to agree what action is needed. Usually, the school will not need to close fully, but in case it does need to close for some children, it will have a contingency plan in place so that your child's education can continue. If your local area sees a spike in infection rates that is resulting in localised community spread, the government will decide what actions need to be taken.

Is there different advice for children who are clinically extremely vulnerable?

Shielding advice for all adults and children paused on 1 August. This means that even the small number of pupils who are still on the shielded patient list and those who have family members who are shielding can return to their school.

Visit **www.gov.uk/backtoschool** for more information on returning to school safely. Your child's school will have more information about the changes they have made ahead of your child's return in the autumn term.

Viv Bennett,
Public Health England's Chief Nurse, has said:

"Parents can be reassured that to maximise safety in schools, an extremely stringent system of controls has been advised by PHE and is published in DfE guidance.

Evidence so far indicates that schools do not appear to be a primary driver of coronavirus infections in the community.

Globally children and young people have been found to experience coronavirus asymptomatically or as a minor illness."

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