



The Rutland Learning Trust

Providing outstanding education for all pupils – today and tomorrow!

First-class education and care that allows every child to achieve their potential, regardless of location, prior attainment or background.

By Working Together
Sustaining Excellence
Transforming Learning

Dear families and friends,

'Each Thursday, for a few brief moments, the new stillness of our streets is interrupted for claps and applause for our NHS and key workers. The cheers denoting both appreciation and hope ring briefly out, then fade to silence once again. These moments offer a sense of unity and coming together, both important and needed, as we face the realities of the Covid-19 Pandemic. Not just on our health but also on the way we live our lives; how we socially and economically function.'

The government acknowledges that these are very challenging and unprecedented times for our country. Measures put in place to reduce the spread of coronavirus (COVID-19) have been hard for us all, but have kept people safe and saved lives. Keeping people safe continues to be the government's top priority.

The government want to get all children back into education as soon as the scientific advice allows because it is the best place for them to learn, and because we know it is good for children's mental wellbeing to have social interactions with other children, carers and teachers. As a result of the huge efforts everyone has made to adhere to strict social distancing measures, the transmission rate of coronavirus has decreased.

Returning to school

From the week commencing 1 June, the government has asked primary schools to welcome back children in **nursery, reception, year 1 and year 6 although they do not expect these pupils to return on a full-time basis at this stage.** Primary schools will continue to offer places to the priority groups – vulnerable children and children of critical workers – they have been supporting since the end of March. This approach aims to limit numbers within schools while ensuring that the children and young people who can benefit from attending most are able to do so.

Across the Rutland Learning Trust, we intend to open our schools to the pupils identified by the government - **in a phased and controlled manner.** Our schools will only invite pupils back when their assessment of the risk is that it is safe for both children and staff to do so.

All of our schools are planning for a phased return. This approach will be reviewed weekly and evaluated at the end of each three-week period. Decisions at the end of these three weeks can then be made about further extending provision for these priority year groups or opening it up to other cohorts so that they can have some time back at school before we break for the summer. These decisions will dependent upon further clarification and guidance from the government.

Families will be updated weekly.

Reasons for choosing this strategy

- Ensure safety and full compliance with Government guidance and recommendations.
- Children will be taught in a smaller group with their own class teacher and support staff (wherever possible) to ensure familiarity and consistency.
- Protect capacity and staffing levels so that decisions can be made about further extending provision for priority year groups or opening up our schools to other cohorts so that more children can have some time back at school before the summer break. This decision will dependent upon further clarification and guidance from the government. Schools would be unable to consider this option this without a phased approach to reopening. Many schools would not have enough classrooms or

appropriate learning spaces available in their setting or enough available teachers or staff to teach the children in the smaller class sizes as recommended.

- Staff will be able to continue to provide remote learning activities or home learning packs for all children.
- Allow for a more enhanced cleaning schedule.

What does the science say?

The latest scientific advice to government is that:

- there is high scientific confidence that children of all ages have less severe symptoms than adults if they contract coronavirus and there is moderately high scientific confidence that younger children are less likely to become unwell if infected with coronavirus
- limiting the numbers of children going back to school initially then gradually increasing numbers, guided by scientific advice, reduces risk of increasing the rate of transmission
- schools can make changes to how they are organised and put measures in place to reduce risks

The government have provided advice to schools on the steps they should consider taking, this includes:

- limiting the amount of contact between different groups of children (such as smaller class sizes with children and staff spread out more)
- additional protective measures, such as increased cleaning and encouraging good hand and respiratory hygiene

What if my child is eligible but has siblings who are not?

The Government are asking that **only these priority year groups return to schools from 1 June**.

This does not include siblings in different year groups unless those siblings are in a priority group, for example, the children of critical workers.

The Government hope that all primary school children can come back to school before the summer holidays, for a month if feasible, although this will be kept under review. Reducing the risks for children and staff is our utmost priority.

This is why we have chosen a phased approach to reopening. It will at least give our schools the option to do this.

How will risks to children, teachers and families be managed?

The government have provided guidance and support to schools on [implementing protective measures in education and childcare settings](#) to help them to reduce the risk of transmission as more children and young people return.

To prevent the spread of coronavirus, schools will use a range of protective measures to create safer environments in which the risk of spreading the virus is substantially reduced. Whilst such changes are likely to look different in each school, as they will depend upon individual circumstances, they are all designed to minimise risks to children, staff and their families.

Approaches include:

- carrying out a risk assessment/response before opening to more children - this will be approved by the Governing Body at each school and published on the school website
- making sure that children do not attend if they or a member of their household has symptoms of coronavirus
- promoting regular hand washing for 20 seconds with running water and soap or use of sanitiser and ensuring good respiratory hygiene by promoting the catch it, bin it, kill it approach

- cleaning more frequently to get rid of the virus on frequently touched surfaces, such as door handles, handrails, tabletops, play equipment and toys
- minimising contact through smaller classes or group sizes and altering the environment as much as possible, such as changing the layout of classrooms
- reducing mixing between groups through timetable changes, such as staggered break times or by introducing staggered drop-off and collection times

If my child is eligible, is it compulsory for them to attend school?

The government and Rutland Learning Trust strongly encourages children in the eligible year groups and priority groups (such as children of critical workers) to attend school, unless they are self-isolating or there are other reasons for absence (such as shielding due to health conditions).

You should notify your child's school as normal if your child is unable to attend so that staff are aware and can discuss with you. **Parents will not be fined for non-attendance at this time.**

Do all vulnerable children who are not currently attending have to go back to childcare settings, school or college now?

Our schools continue to offer places to priority groups. Vulnerable children of all year groups continue to be expected and encouraged to attend educational provision where it is appropriate for them to do so.

For children who have a social worker, attendance is expected unless their social worker decides that they are at less risk at home or in their placement.

For children who have an education health and care (EHC) plan, attendance is expected where it is determined, following a risk assessment, that their needs can be as safely or more safely met in school.

Should I keep my child at home if they have an underlying health condition or live with someone in a clinically vulnerable group?

Children and young people who are considered [extremely clinically vulnerable and shielding](#) should continue to shield and should not be expected to attend.

Clinically vulnerable (but not clinically extremely vulnerable) people are those considered to be at a higher risk of severe illness from coronavirus. A minority of children will fall into this category, and parents should follow medical advice if their child is in this category.

Children who live in a household with someone who is [extremely clinically vulnerable and shielding](#) should only attend if stringent social distancing can be adhered to and the child or young person is able to understand and follow those instructions.

Children who live with someone who is clinically vulnerable (but not extremely clinically vulnerable) as defined in the [social distancing guidance](#) and including those who are pregnant, can attend.

Can children be tested for the virus?

The government have promised that once schools open to more children and staff, pupils in all settings will be eligible for testing if they become ill with coronavirus symptoms, as will members of their household. This will enable children to get back to education, and their parents or carers to get back to work, if the test proves to be negative.

A positive test will ensure rapid action to protect their classmates and staff in their setting.

What happens if there is a confirmed case of coronavirus in my child's school, college or childcare setting?

When a child or staff member develops symptoms compatible with coronavirus, they will be sent home and advised to self-isolate for 7 days. Their fellow household members should self-isolate for 14 days. All staff and children who are attending a school will have access to a test if they display symptoms of coronavirus.

Where the child or staff member tests positive, the rest of their class/group will be sent home and advised to self-isolate for 14 days. The other household members of that wider class/group do not need to self-isolate unless the child or staff member they live with in that group subsequently develops symptoms.

Where settings are observing guidance on infection prevention and control, which will reduce risk of transmission, closure of the whole setting will not generally be necessary.

Will education be provided as normal to children and young people who are attending?

Yes - pupils in our schools will continue to have planned remote learning activities or have learning packs sent home.

How should my child travel to and from their childcare, school or college?

Children and parents are encouraged to walk or cycle where possible and avoid public transport if at all possible. The government will shortly publish further guidance on how to travel safely.

We continue to face challenging and uncertain times ahead, the like of which we have never known, but it has given us all enormous pride to see first-hand our collective response over the last few months - it has been nothing short of phenomenal. Thank you everyone: teachers, support staff and families. We know that this understanding, appreciation, flexibility, inspiration and dedication will continue to characterise your response.

Kind regards,

James Saunders - Chair of Trustees
Rob Gooding - CEO