

SAST Update on schools reopening 21 May 2020

Since the government announced plans to welcome back selected year groups of students into schools from the 1st June, at the earliest, we have been working closely with headteachers and staff to look at how we can adapt school life to ensure it is as safe as possible. All our schools have continued to be open and available for the children of key workers and vulnerable children as defined by the DFE. A final decision on any national re-opening is conditional on the confirmation of the 5 key tests set by Government scheduled for 28 May.

The plans for reopening for certain groups applies to:

- nurseries and other early year providers, including childminders, to begin welcoming back all children
- primary schools to welcome back children in nursery (where they have them), reception, year 1 and year 6
- secondary schools, sixth form, and further education colleges to begin some face to face support with year 10 and 12 pupils, although we do not expect these pupils to return on a full-time basis at this stage
- all schools and childcare providers to continue to offer places to the priority groups – vulnerable children and children of critical workers – they have been supporting since the end of March
- alternative provision to welcome back children in reception, year 1 and year 6 and begin some face to face support with year 10 and 11 pupils (as they have no year 12)

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 and college initially then gradually increasing numbers, guided by scientific advice, reduces risk of increasing the rate of transmission
- schools and other settings can make changes to how they are organised and put measures in place to reduce risks

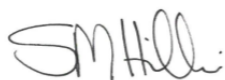
In the SW including Dorset, Somerset and Wiltshire infection rates are low and cases have been low. Dorset Council supports schools in their plans for any return.

The planning and preparation follow national guidance. We are also working collaboratively with teaching unions and staff to support them and their safety. All our settings have completed risk assessments.

The return to school will look different with a range of arrangements. Not all schools or settings will be able to offer full time provision to the identified year groups given the guidance they have to follow around pupil numbers, safe working and also staff availability. There may be a phased approach to limit numbers on site at any one time, and we may need to stagger the school day to safeguard parents as well as students. Common features are smaller class sizes of no more than 15, limiting the amount of contact between different groups of children, increased cleaning and encouraging good hand and respiratory hygiene. The re-introduction of pupils will be staggered to allow schools to prepare so schools will not necessarily be open for all year groups from 1 June but as soon as practicable.

Each school will come up with a plan that best suits their locality. Flexibility will be key, and we appreciate the support of everyone involved when facing these challenges. The detailed arrangements for each school will be communicated by the Headteacher.

We would like to reassure everyone that as we move forward, our top priority is the welfare of our students and staff, and we will do everything we can to provide the safest school environments possible.



SM Hillier, CEO