

GUIDANCE NOTES FOR SCHOOLS AND PARENTS OF CHILDREN RETURNING TO SCHOOL DURING THE COVID PANDEMIC AND THE REASONS WHY A GP LETTER IS NOT REQUIRED

The Government has advised that children from certain Year Groups should return to schools, and this commenced from June 1st.

This was in recognition by the Government and Public Health bodies of the importance of resuming education for children to support their academic development as well as their social and emotional wellbeing.

Guidance has been issued by the Health and Education Departments to explain this decision, which children are expected to attend and which children should still be kept at home and 'shielded' until further advice from the UK Government. For further information about children who are deemed to be Clinically extremely vulnerable please refer to -

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-on-shielding-and-protecting-extremely-vulnerable-persons-from-covid-19>

All other children are expected to return to education as and when their Year Groups are invited to do so, as the Government and the Royal College of Paediatricians advises that those children (including the ones in the Moderate health risk group) are overwhelmingly likely to benefit from returning to school.

More information about risk groups can be found here –

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/people-at-higher-risk/whos-at-higher-risk-from-coronavirus/>

Understandably some parents who have children with health conditions (ie they are deemed to be possibly at moderate risk but are not in the Clinically extremely vulnerable group) may still have anxieties about returning them to school. The Guidance however is clear that there is NO requirement or expectation of the provision of any letter from a GP concerning this. GPs are NOT obligated to write letters for parents in this matter and there is NO direction for schools to request one.

Currently the Government has announced that it will not penalise parents who still decide not to return their children to school when eligible to attend, but would expect those parents and the school to discuss individual concerns and work together to resolve any

issues and anxieties. Again there is NO indication or requirement for a GP letter in this matter and letters should NOT be requested.

For the reassurance of parents schools have been instructed as follows –

- To carry out a risk assessment before opening to more children and young people, and directly address risks associated with coronavirus so that sensible measures can be put in place to minimise those risks for children, young people and staff.
- To make sure that children and young people do not attend if they or a member of their household has symptoms of coronavirus.
- To promote 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.
- To clean more frequently, to get rid of the virus on frequently touched surfaces, such as door handles, handrails, tabletops, play equipment and toys.
- To minimise contact through smaller classes or group sizes and altering the environment as much as possible, such as changing the layout of classrooms.
- To reduce mixing between groups through timetable changes, such as staggered break times or by introducing staggered drop-off and collection times.

Further information can be found at -

<https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus/education-and-childcare>

Parents should also be reassured that their GP Practice remains open to all Patients using a mix of telephone, video and (where needed) face to face appointments. This ensures the safe delivery of Healthcare and support. We would like to thank parents and schools in not requesting unnecessary letters so we can continue treating our patients effectively and appropriately.