



## **LA Briefing for PCF – 24<sup>th</sup> August 2020**

For most of us we are approaching the end of the school summer holidays with one thought, the re-opening of schools for all children from the start of the new term. This is clearly a challenging time for parents and carers as well as for schools and their staff teams, preparing the environment, curriculum, 'bubbles', transport. Health and safety are now at the top of the agenda to ensure children and young people are going back to learning after what has been for the majority, a very long time, away from the classroom.

We're aware that supporting learning from home has been very challenging with the focus now on re-establishing the school routine and catching up. For some, the opportunity to engage more in online learning has been a real motivator and fully embraced. Schools, settings and colleges will be taking the opportunity to learn from this, engaging more often with children, young people and their families virtually. That said, many will have missed the face to face 'in person' teaching and social contact with their peers and so the return to 'normal' cannot come soon enough. That 'normal' though may look very different and adjusting to it may take some time. A return to the classroom after such a long time can be an anxious time for families. For many, attending school, on a daily basis again, will be a big change in routine, possibly sleep patterns too, and may even spark some social anxiety.

In this issue we have a focus on the return to school, including some very helpful top tips for preparing our children and managing the anxieties that many are facing.

### **DfE guidance for parents and carers about the return to school**

The weblink below provides the most recent update covering issues and concerns such as:

- Welcoming children and young people back to school and college
- Children returning to nurseries, childminders and other early years providers
- School and college attendance
- How everyone can help make schools and colleges as safe as possible
- Arriving and leaving school or college
- Curriculum, exams and inspection
- What else you need to know (Behaviour, Uniform, School Food, School trips, Extra-curricular activities)
- Process in the event of outbreaks

<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>

Families with children returning to school in Leicestershire this autumn can access new online information and support.

Leicestershire County Council has published new practical guidance about returning to school on themes such as attendance, hygiene and school transport, as well as information about health, wellbeing and adapting to new routines.

Deborah Taylor, Leicestershire County Council cabinet member for children and families, said:

***“Many of our children and young people have been out of school for some time now and the new ‘norm’ will be obviously be different from what they are used to.***

***“Our families have been incredibly flexible during this pandemic, taking on home schooling and making it work for them, and school staff have done an amazing job looking after vulnerable children and the children of key workers while schools were closed to the rest of pupils. We’d like to thank you all.***

***“However, now is the time to go back to school and, with that, we realise that people will have lots of questions about what this will look like.***

***“We have included some practical information about returning to school on our web pages but would like to add that schools are making their individual arrangements about when they are returning and will be contacting parents about this through their usual communication channels.***

***“We do appreciate that a return after such a long time can be an anxious time for families. For many, attending school on a daily basis again will be a big change in routine, possibly sleep patterns too, and may even spark some social anxiety.***

***“This is why we have also added information about managing worries and anxiety, keeping fit, creating structured routines and the importance of a healthy diet.***

***“We hope that the information we are providing will go some way towards allaying concerns.”***

Schools across the county will open their doors to all pupils from Wednesday, August 26 onwards after being closed to most since tighter lockdown measures were introduced in March.

Practical guidance about returning to school with themes such as attendance, hygiene and school transport is available here:

<https://www.leicestershire.gov.uk/education-and-children/schools-colleges-and-academies/coronavirus-school-closures-and-updates>

We are encouraging families to consider walking, cycling or scooting to school to keep healthy and help maintain social distancing. More information on sustainable ways to travel to school is available on:

[www.choosehowyoumove.co.uk/covid-19-back-to-school/](http://www.choosehowyoumove.co.uk/covid-19-back-to-school/)

All schools have carried out their own rigorous risk assessments and made their own plans for the safety of their pupils, so we are advising parents that schools will contact them directly about back to school arrangements via their usual communication channels.

Hints, tips and resources about managing worries and anxiety keeping fit, structured routines and eating healthily is available at:

[www.leicestershire.gov.uk/school-ready-2020](http://www.leicestershire.gov.uk/school-ready-2020)



### **School Transport Update**

The local authority transport team that plans, arranges and oversees travel to and from school for those children and young people, entitled to provision have worked relentlessly throughout the lockdown and in preparation for the return to school at the start of the new term. The guidance from the DfE has changed over the last few months and the most recent information can be accessed through the council website, where parents and carers can also find frequently asked questions. Please keep checking this section, however, as it is regularly updated.

This is the link to access the relevant webpage:

<https://www.leicestershire.gov.uk/education-and-children/school-transport/home-to-school-transport-coronavirus-update-for-autumn-2020>

And here is the direct link to the DfE guidance:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/transport-to-school-and-other-places-of-education-autumn-term-2020/transport-to-school-and-other-places-of-education-autumn-term-2020>

## Education Psychology Advice

Returning to primary school after the 'lockdown' is likely to be an exciting but also worrying time for children. As a parent or carer, you might be a little anxious too. This is perfectly understandable. But there are some simple things you can do to help them to prepare for their 'new normal'. We hope that the following tips will help you support your child's successful return to school.

**Time to talk** – your child is likely to experience a mix of emotions about returning to school, from excited and eager, to concern, worry and anxiety. Be available to listen to your child's thoughts and concerns, help them to explore and find ways of managing more difficult feelings.



**Offer reassurance** – explain that these feelings are normal. Like all feelings, they will change and come and go.

**Be a positive role model** – model coping strategies that you use to help you feel calm and positive e.g. being active and using breathing and calming techniques. If appropriate, talk about your thoughts about returning to 'normal' life and/or work and the ways that you are managing and coping with difficult feelings. Use stories and/or picture books to help you explain this in an age appropriate way.



**Talk about school** – talk about the routines, rules and practices that they were familiar with. Some of these will have changed (e.g. social distancing and hygiene measures, staying in teaching 'bubbles') but many will have stayed the same (e.g. the building, playground, adults and peers). Focus on the positives, for example, seeing their friends again.

**Routines** – in most families, routines around work, play, sleep and time spent on digital technology have become flexible. This is perfectly normal and something all children are familiar with, particularly during summer holidays. Prepare for going back to school the same way that you would approach the end of the summer holidays.



**Sleep routines** – during term time, a minimum of 9 to 11 hours of good sleep is recommended for 5 -11 year olds. Encourage your child to start returning to a normal term-time sleep routine at least two weeks before a return to school. Avoid lie-ins (especially at weekends) and push sleep forward by 15 minutes each day to help them adjust to earlier bedtimes and wake-ups.

**Encourage healthy routines** – healthy habits around exercise and diet will help to improve sleep, learning and wellbeing. Encourage at least 1 hour of moderate exercise a day e.g. riding a scooter, walking the dog, skipping, and climbing.



**Manage screen time** – if possible, don't have screens (e.g. TV, mobile phone, tablet) in the bedroom at night. Encourage your child to have at least 1 hour of 'screen free' time before bed. Use a blue light filter or app if possible to stop the light from screens interfering with sleep.

## **Wellbeing for Education Return from the Education Effectiveness Team**

Alongside locally developed resources and support, Leicestershire County Council will be working with the Department for Education and the Department of Health and Social Care who are providing resources to better equip schools and colleges to promote children and young people's wellbeing, resilience, and recovery in response to Covid-19. This includes a new national training package providing guidance and resources for education staff and will give the opportunity to co-ordinate with other local partners.

## **Successful transition back to school for children and young people with Autism**

The Specialist Teaching Service have produced a very detailed presentation full of good advice and guidance for supporting children and young people back into school following the disruptions caused by the Covid-19 pandemic. Schools and other professionals have also been sent this document to help families through this time of anxiety. This presentation is very detailed but may be of help to some parents and carers. There are lots of links and signposts to other reference articles also included which may be useful.



Positive Transitions  
to school Post COVI