

Monday 25 January 2021



Dear parents

I hardly need to tell you that this is a challenging time for parents across our communities. We recognise the many pressures you are facing. For some, these pressures are even greater because access to education for their children is not as straightforward as we all wish it could be. The key message from government is to keep your child at home if you possibly can, even if you are a critical worker.

Leicester City schools are trying their very best to enable their pupils to attend. They are taking all the necessary steps to manage the risks for children and staff and to reduce transmission of the virus. However, there are many factors they are having to weigh up daily in assessing their ability to offer full-time on-site education for pupils. This includes making sure there are sufficient staff who can be safely on-site to support the pupils in their learning and to help minimise transmission of the virus, while at the same time ensuring the school is able to deliver a rich range of remote education for the many children who are not attending.

Anywhere people meet and interact with each other is a possible source of transmission. We know that infection rates among adults are far higher than they are among children, but we have also seen that having children attend school leads to more mixing between adults, and thereby increases the rate of transmission in the community. All school and education settings continue to carefully consider how to reduce this risk and keep children and staff as safe as possible. We know that regular attendance at school is good for children's mental health and wellbeing, as well as for their education. Nonetheless, with the current high levels of infection in the community, it is better that there are fewer pupils attending school. This will reduce repeated periods of self-isolation for pupils and staff if they are in direct or close contact with others who test positive.

In light of this, schools are looking to increase the number of children who can attend, if they can do so safely, but this needs to be balanced against the risk to pupils, their families and school staff. There are additional challenges for special schools due to the complex needs of many of their pupils, who need to have closer contact and support from staff. Many of these pupils find it very difficult to cope with changes in the school environment, including staff, routine and classroom changes. This also applies to some children in mainstream schools and in alternative provision. Your child's school will discuss with you when it is the right time for your child to be attending school, considering your child's needs and the measures the school can safely put in place.

Schools will continue to review all new national guidance and will adjust arrangements when circumstances change. We encourage you to keep in contact with your child's school, so they can work with the whole school community and plan the best way forward to have pupils more consistently back to school. I can assure you that we are doing our absolute best to bring all pupils back to school as soon as it is safe to do so, but not before.

With best wishes

Martin Samuels

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