

24 August 2020

Dear Parent/Carer

I hope you are all keeping well and enjoying the last weeks of the summer holidays.

As you will be aware, all schools in England are fully re-opening for the autumn term at the beginning of September.

I'm sure many families will be looking forward to schools opening again and understandably, you may have some questions or concerns. I wanted to write this letter to provide you with key information and hopefully answer some of the questions you may have, to help your child start the new academic year with as little disruption as possible.

### **Does my child have to go back to school in September?**

Yes. It will be mandatory, by law, that all children return to school this September as stated in Section 444 of the Education Act 1996. Failure to comply could result in prosecution.

A small number of pupils will still be unable to attend school in line with public health advice because they are self-isolating and have had symptoms or a positive test result themselves, or because they are a close contact of someone who has coronavirus (COVID-19). If your child is unable to attend school or college for this reason, you should talk to your school or college about what support is in place in terms of remote education.

Some year groups at some schools may have staggered start and finish times to ensure pupils can arrive and leave school safely. You will be notified by your child's school if this applies to you.

### **Is it safe for my child to return to school?**

We have worked closely with all the schools in the borough to ensure they are safe to re-open in September. All schools have updated their risk assessments and are following government guidance closely to implement safety measures, such as:

- Increased robust cleaning practises
- Grouping together of pupils into 'bubbles'. The way these bubbles are used will vary from school to school
- Forward facing work desks
- Social distancing amongst staff as much as possible
- Hand sanitisation stations and the promotion of regular hand washing throughout the day

## **PEOPLE DIRECTORATE**

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## How should we travel to school?

We're encouraging all parents and carers to walk or cycle to school where possible. It will also help contribute to your child's recommended 60 minutes of exercise a day, reduce congestion on the roads and help the local environment. Car sharing should be avoided at this time.

If you do have to use public transport for your journey, you can do so safely by following the up to date guidance. This includes, washing or sanitising your hands before and after your journey and wearing a face covering on public transport at all times, unless you are exempt.

For more information on getting to school this September, visit our [Active Ways to School page](#).

## How can I help my child return to school safely?

- By ensuring that anyone in your household who has coronavirus (COVID-19) symptoms does not attend school or college. If you or someone in your household does develop symptoms then you will need to begin isolating immediately and book a test via [NHS Test and Trace](#) or call 119. Do not assume 'it is just a cough'. If you have any of the [symptoms](#), get tested.
- Getting your child into the routine of washing their hands more often with soap and water for 20 seconds, as they'll have to do this during the school day.
- Promote good respiratory hygiene, encourage your child to use the 'catch it, bin it, kill it' approach.
- Try to minimise contact with other households and teach good social distancing. Although at school lots of different households will begin to mix, it is important to continue to reduce exposure as much as possible, therefore reducing risk of spreading the virus. For example, only members of two households should be meeting indoors, outside of the school environment.
- Start practising good habits as we approach the new academic year, such as: getting a good night's sleep, waking up on time and healthy eating. Make sure everything is ready for the start of term such as a clean uniform and school bag.

## Holiday abroad; do we need to isolate upon our return?

There is a [list of countries](#) that you can travel to and return home as normal, without a 14 day isolation period.

However, popular holiday destinations such as Spain and France have been removed from this list and upon your return to the UK you must [isolate for 14 days](#). If the isolation period conflicts with your child returning to school, you must continue to self-isolate and do not send your child to school until the 14 days are over. If this applies to you, please contact your child's school in advance to notify them. These arrangements are regularly being updated with countries added and taken off the quarantine list so please ensure you have the latest available information in order to comply as appropriate.

## **My child is very anxious about returning to school, what should I do?**

It is completely understandable that after a very disruptive six months your child may be anxious to return to school. This will not be an uncommon feeling amongst pupils, and schools will do all they can to ensure a calm, smooth start to the new academic year.

It's important to communicate with your child the safety measures in place to protect them in order to prepare them for this new experience. If you have significant concern about your child's anxiety, please contact your child's school to see how they can assist.

If there have been any changes to your family's circumstances during this period of absence from school, please inform your child's school at the start of term so they are aware and are able to support your child.

We have collated a number of resources that parents and carers may find useful, Please visit our [designated resource webpage](#).

It has been a challenging year for all, but now is the time to work together and look forward to what I hope to be a successful academic year for our children and young people. I'd like to take this opportunity to wish all our Bracknell Forest pupils, school staff and teachers a happy and safe return to school this September.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "R. Morgan". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping initial 'R'.

Rachel Morgan (Mrs)  
Assistant Director: Education & Learning