

Dr Gabrielle Stacey,
Assistant Director SEND and Vulnerable Learners,
Worcestershire Children First,
County Hall,
Spetchley Road,
Worcester,
WR5 2NP.

18th May 2020

Dear Parent/Carer,

Since late March special schools in Worcestershire have been providing education and support for their pupils in a very different way as a result of the Covid-19 outbreak. Schools have been delivering education remotely with many children staying at home. Risk assessments have been completed for every child in the special schools to determine whether their needs can be met safely at home or whether they should attend school during this time.

On Monday 11th May the Department of Education determined that from June 1st 'special schools should work towards welcoming back as many children and young people as can be safely catered for in their setting'.

Unlike mainstream schools the guidance for special schools does not advise that specific year groups need to return on June 1st. Special schools are advised that they may want to prioritise attendance based on key transitions and the impact on life chances and development, and to consider creating part-time attendance rotas so that as many children as possible can benefit from attending their setting.

The Department of Education guidance also states that special settings should work with local authorities and families to ensure that decisions about attendance are informed by existing risk assessments for their children and young people. We are awaiting further planning guidance to assist schools in carrying this out.

Worcestershire special schools are working closely with Worcestershire Children First to agree how they will plan for the return of increasing numbers of learners from 1st June. This planning will involve detailed thought about issues such as how to use space within school buildings effectively to reduce the risk of transmission, availability of staff, transport and how to help children and parents prepare for returning to school. A detailed risk assessment tool is being made available to schools to support this process.

It is clear from early discussions that the risk assessments for each of the special schools will be different. The risk assessments will reflect the unique needs of students in each setting and the practical arrangements which can be made to ensure children can be welcomed back safely. The risk assessments will be discussed with Worcestershire Children First and final decisions made by head teachers in collaboration with governors and senior management teams.

Individual special schools will share their plans with you as their thinking progresses over the coming weeks. As further guidance becomes available from the Department of Education this will also be shared with you through the SEND Local Offer.

Thank you for your patience during this time while plans are agreed for pupils over the remaining weeks of the summer term.

Your sincerely



Dr Gabrielle Stacey

Assistant Director SEND and Vulnerable Learners, Worcestershire Children First