

Response to Government Guidance to re-open Knowsley Schools from 1 June 2020

Frequently Asked Questions

Q. *Are Knowsley schools implementing the Government guidance and re-opening from 1 June 2020 to pupils in Nursery, Reception, Year 1, Year 6 and Year 10?*

No. It is worth noting that all Knowsley schools have actually been open throughout the COVID-19 pandemic in terms of providing emergency childcare for vulnerable children and the children of key workers. Knowsley schools and Knowsley Council recognise that the relatively late national Government announcement mean that there was not sufficient planning time to extend this offer to other key year groups by 1 June 2020; therefore schools in Knowsley will not be extending their pupil populations by 1 June 2020.

Q. *When will Knowsley schools re-open?*

It is more important for schools to re-open safely than it is to meet any arbitrary deadline. Schools in Knowsley will therefore re-open when Head Teachers and their Governing Bodies have agreed with all key stakeholders that it is safe to do so. Each individual school is required to undertake comprehensive risk assessments, working with accredited professionals and trade unions to ensure that all health and safety requirements are met.

Schools will need to re-organise classrooms, corridors, playgrounds and teaching groups before they can begin to welcome more children back to school. They will need to revise key policies, introduce new systems, source new resources, and implement public health guidance, as well as providing training/briefings so that all staff understand these new ways of working.

Each school is different and it is therefore not possible – and neither would it be appropriate - to give a definitive date for the re-opening of Knowsley schools. Initial intelligence suggests that the majority of schools will be extending their offer to pupils from **15 June 2020 at the earliest**. The Council believes that the focus must be on the safe re-opening of each individual setting and recognises how difficult it is for each school to reach a decision when the national guidance and testing arrangements etc are changing so frequently – and therefore the Council will not be setting any specific date by which schools must meet safety standards.

Q. *Will all identified year groups be welcomed back together?*

No. Schools will take a gradual phased approach to the welcoming back of more students. Based on their risk assessments and available staffing, individual schools will identify the year groups who they will welcome back first. Our initial information suggests that many of our schools will start to welcome back Year 6 first. Schools will communicate their individual plans to their families.

Q. *Will schools remain open for the children of key workers?*

Yes; all schools in Knowsley have offered emergency childcare to key workers throughout the COVID-19 pandemic and this will continue.

Q. *Will schools remain open for vulnerable children?*

Yes; all schools in Knowsley have offered emergency childcare to vulnerable children throughout the COVID-19 pandemic and this will continue.

Q. *What steps do schools need to take to re-open?*

The relevant Government guidance can be accessed [here](#) – it outlines a wide range of requirements for schools to consider before they welcome more students back to school. Trade Unions have also produced a joint checklist for school leaders to consider when planning for the return of more pupils. In addition to comprehensive risk assessments, some of the protective measures which schools are asked to have in place are:-

- Making sure that staff and children with symptoms of COVID-19 do not attend
- Reduced class sizes – to no more than 15 per teaching group
- Keeping teaching groups in “social bubbles” throughout the day in order to prevent contact with others outside the “bubble”
- Restricting movement into and around school
- Good hand hygiene and respiratory hygiene systems
- Enhanced cleaning
- Good ventilation
- Utilising outdoor spaces
- Restricting parent/carer access to playgrounds/school buildings etc.

Q. *Will all children in key year groups have a school place?*

Not necessarily. Schools will audit their available staff and physical teaching spaces; they will then decide which year groups (in addition to the key worker children and vulnerable children groups) which they can safely accommodate in school. Some schools may be required to cap the number of places in particular year groups depending on the number of available staff, the flexibility of teaching spaces, and the demand from key worker and vulnerable children. Individual schools will communicate their plans to their communities.

Q. *Is it compulsory for children in identified year groups to attend?*

No; at present parents/carers can choose whether to access a school place or not. Families will not be penalised if they choose not to send their children to school.

Q. *Will schools have staggered start/finish times?*

To support the safe collection/pick up of children and to adhere to social distancing measures, it is highly likely that schools will introduce staggered start and finish times. Schools will communicate their individual plans to parents/carers.

Q. *Are Knowsley planning for all primary schools to return before the summer holidays?*

This is a decision for the Governing Body to make in each individual school, but it appears unlikely at present that all Knowsley primary schools will have fully reopened by the start of the summer holidays. The Council will not be setting any arbitrary target date for schools to reopen.

Q. *What will happen if there is a suspected or confirmed case of coronavirus in a school?*

Government guidance published on 20 May 2020 states that - when a child, young person or staff member develops symptoms compatible with coronavirus, they should be sent home and advised to self-isolate for 7 days. Their fellow household members should self-isolate for 14 days. All staff and

students who are attending an education or childcare setting will have access to a test if they display symptoms of coronavirus.

The national guidance is currently being updated in the light of the development of the national contact tracing programme. Where a child, young person or staff member tests positive, close contacts within their class/group within their childcare or education setting should be sent home and advised to self-isolate for 14 days. The other household members of that wider class/group do not need to self-isolate unless the child, young person or staff member who they live with in that group subsequently develops symptoms.

Where settings are observing guidance on infection prevention and control, which will reduce risk of transmission, closure of the whole setting will not generally be necessary.

When staff are caring for a symptomatic child or colleague who has become ill in the workplace, they should ensure that they wear full PPE as outlined in the Government guidance “Coronavirus: COVID19 Guidance for Educational Settings” (last updated on 20 May 2020).

Q. *Will PPE be available to schools?*

Government guidance indicates that schools should use local supply routes to secure PPE. Many schools will already have an available stock of some PPE. Schools are able to use a Service Level Agreement with the Council or their own supply routes to secure more PPE based on need in line with Government guidelines.

Q. *Can schools access coronavirus tests for staff and children?*

Yes; children over the age of 5 and all school staff can access testing for coronavirus via the Government’s website.

Q. *What arrangements are in place for track and trace systems and how can schools access them?*

As part of the national test and trace programme, if cases are detected within a child or young person’s cohort or in a wider education or childcare setting, Public Health England’s local Health Protection Teams will conduct a rapid investigation and, in conjunction with the Council’s Public Health team, will

advise schools and other settings on the most appropriate action to take. Schools will be updated further on outbreak management protocols once further government guidance has been published.

Q. *How will clinically vulnerable and extremely clinically vulnerable staff and children be protected?*

People who are classed as *extremely clinically vulnerable* are advised to remain at home and schools should seek to support staff and children to do so.

Clinically vulnerable staff, *including pregnant women*, should work at home if they can. If they cannot work from home they should be offered the safest available onsite roles and strict social distancing measures should be rigorously implemented within the setting.

Students who are *clinically vulnerable*, are directed to seek medical advice in relation to attending school.

Q. *How satisfied are parents/carers with the approach taken in Knowsley so far?*

A recent survey of Knowsley parents/carers in relation to the re-opening of schools indicated that many were highly satisfied with the emphasis being on Knowsley schools opening safely as opposed to according to any arbitrary timescale.