

## **Southampton Schools Update – 26/05/20**

Schools are poised to take an increasing number of students after half term. As such they are not reopening as they have not been closed for the last 8 weeks due to providing care for vulnerable and children of critical workers.

While some are in a position to take in the year groups specified by the government others are not, but will do so when they have implemented the strategies to ensure the safety of staff and children.

However, all schools and EYS are planning for the increasing numbers, but are taking the following into consideration:

- a) Logistical demands of maintaining social distancing between pupils
- b) Introducing staggered start, finish, lesson and break times to limit contact
- c) Availability of staff
- d) Existing numbers of children of critical workers and those who are vulnerable.
- e) Union, scientific and governmental advice, none of which are currently aligned.
- f) Parental interest in having their children return
- g) Transport to and from school, college
- h) Availability of PPE equipment
- i) Clarity over liability and insurance cover.

The LA has provided support on implementing the government guidance to all Heads, all schools have been given a generic risk assessment from the Education Team to help with planning along with legal guidance and advice from Health colleagues, PPE equipment has been ordered for all maintained schools. All schools have been contacted by members of the team to discuss plans for reopening and to check on the welfare of the Headteacher.

In the medium term, the LA will be supporting through the Educational Psychology service to help pupils with mental health issues, resulting from the shutdown, and will be supporting those schools whose plans are not fit for purpose.

In the longer term the QA team will be supporting schools from September with their Recovery Strategy and the production of a appropriate curriculum which brings children back into a learning mentality The inclusion and EWO teams will be working with schools as there is an expectation that next term exclusions will increase greatly while attendance will be down.

Other issues being addressed in addition to the normal responsibilities of the service are the implications of the governments giveaway of IT equipment to schools and vulnerable children. About 1300 computers will become the property of the LA who will in the short term be responsible for these. There is also concern over the financial viability of numerous early years settings and some schools in the independent sector, one having gone into administration last week resulting in a large increase in 'in-year' admissions for the team to process.

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