



Wednesday 27th May 2020

Dear Parents and carers

All of the special schools and integrated resources in Sheffield meet regularly as a partnership. Each school is communicating with its parents and carers about the specific details that you need to know in this unprecedented situation but we felt that it would also be helpful to also make contact with you as a partnership. We want you to know that we are **trying to make things as consistent as possible across the city whilst also recognising that each of our schools and settings is also unique.**

We are working with local and national guidance following the government announcement that schools are likely to open to more pupils in the weeks ahead. This is a **different process in our special schools and integrated resources than it is in other primary and secondary schools.**

This means that increasing the number of pupils who are learning in school will feel less like a 'reopening' of specific year groups and more of a gradual expansion in our schools. This is because, for all of our pupils, **the decision about when and how they should return will be made by assessing their needs and best interests alongside you and the schools capacity to keep children and staff safe within the guidance.** The government guidance supports this approach and explicitly says that their guidance about year groups does not apply to special schools.

We will, of course, **only begin to expand our numbers more significantly when it is safe to do so.** Each of our schools is risk assessing and planning how to approach this just as mainstream schools are. It also, therefore, **important that you know which things about are provision are likely to be different during the weeks ahead.**

Children will work in smaller groups, as suggested by the government guidance, and this means that **we will have fewer places overall** than we usually do and that **places may often be part time.**

Our **staffing may also be slightly different,** given that some staff currently have to continue to work from home and the guidance is that we should ensure that children and adults work in 'social bubbles' that do not mix.

We will do everything that we can to keep pupils safe but we recognise, as the government has said, that **our pupils cannot maintain a ‘social distance’ from other children or adults.**

Each school will communicate with you about the measures that they are taking to minimise risks in their setting. We know that you having a clear picture of how the provision will work will be an important part of the decisions that we take together.

Finally, we wanted to reassure you about two practical issues. The government have been very clear that **no attendance fines will be issued in this next stage** – so none of you should worry about that. Also, whilst SEN transport continues to operate, we have confirmed that **parents and carers do have the option to transport children themselves and claim back expenses** in line with the council’s current policy. Not everyone will be able to do this but we know that some of you will find it helpful.

Thank you for everything that you do to support us. We are all extremely grateful. **We miss our pupils very much and look forward to the time when we can return to ‘normal’ but until that time we are committed, as always, to working with you to determine the best approach for every child and young person in our care.**

Stay safe and very best wishes from all of the school leaders in the Sheffield Special School and Integrated Resource Partnership.

Yours sincerely
Special & Integrated Resource Schools Partnership Group

