

1 September 2020

Schools ready for a safe welcome back

Schools in Newcastle are all set to welcome pupils back to the classrooms from next week.

For the majority of children it will be their first return to the classroom since the government ordered schools to close their gates in March as part of national lockdown measures.

And while pupils and staff will need to get to grips with new routines and changes to their school day, Newcastle City Council is reassuring families that all steps have been taken to make sure schools are as safe as possible.

Cllr Paula Holland, cabinet member for education and skills at Newcastle City Council, said: "We know that some parents, carers and pupils might have concerns about whether it's safe to go back to school and we fully understand this.

"I would like to reassure families that the city council, schools and our partners such as Nexus, have worked very hard to make sure children can enjoy a safe and welcome return.

"Our Special Educational Needs Disability transport team and transport providers have also been working hard over the summer to make sure that children with special educational needs and disabilities can travel to and from school safely.

"Every school is putting in place all necessary steps to keep people safe. Staff will help and support children as they get used to the new arrangements.

"After such a long time away from the classroom and from their friends and teachers, it's really important that children get back to school now. I know that schools are fully prepared and really looking forward to welcoming their pupils back next week."

Chief Medical Officers in England, Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales said last week that children have a lower risk of being seriously ill from coronavirus and that there is no evidence that children transmit the disease any more than adults do.

However, there will still be some risks while the virus remains in the community and therefore, in line with national guidance, schools are putting in place a number of procedures and making changes to how things will work.

Information and advice for families on returning to school and planning for journeys has been published to help people prepare.

This includes information on what steps schools are taking to keep everyone safe, advice on when pupils must wear a face covering and important details people need to know in relation to travelling to school.

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The guide also includes information on what would happen in the event of an outbreak and what parents and carers should do.

This can be found at <https://www.newcastle.gov.uk/services/public-health-wellbeing-and-leisure/public-health-services/coronavirus-covid-19/school-and>.

Further information on travel to school and planning your journey can be found at www.nexus.org.uk/covid-secure.

Updated information about SEND transport can be found at <https://www.newcastlesupportdirectory.org.uk/kb5/newcastle/fsd/advice.page?id=TcZGIYJcZco>

Schools have been in touch with families about their individual arrangements. Parents and carers who have any questions are asked to contact their school directly.

Cllr Holland thanked school teachers and staff for their work they have done throughout the pandemic to support children and families.

She said: "Teachers have been an amazing asset to the city. They have worked tirelessly during Covid in order to keep schools open for children of key workers and vulnerable children.

"So I would just like to put on record my thanks for all their hard work, their dedication and their support to our children and families.

"I hope that parents and carers are confident that our schools are safe places for their children and that our pupils enjoy being back with their school friends once again."

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