

Ealing Learning Partnership

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Dear colleagues,

From response to recovery: a phased approach to securing full-time education provision for all pupils in Ealing

Phase 1 May to July 2020

Introduction

1. On the 10th May the government announced its plans to ease the lock down that has been in place since 23rd March. It indicated that the plan was subject to review depending on the impact of the actions on the infection rate. Included in these plans are a set of ambitions for schools to open for more pupils this term. These are:
 - **From this month**, a greater number of vulnerable children and young people (those with social workers or EHC Plans) to attend school.
 - **From 1st June onwards**, primary schools to re-open for children in Nursery, Reception, Year 1 and Year 6.
 - **From 1st June onwards**, high schools to supplement remote learning by offering some face to face support to Year 10 and Year 12.
 - Alternative Provision to mirror the groups above except in the secondary sector where it should focus on Year 10 and Year 11.
2. We recognise that there are many differences of view about these plans and it is important to note that implementation cannot begin until after the government has issued final confirmation against its key tests on **28th May**.

3. While we are seeking broad consistency in the way that schools interpret these plans, decisions about opening, organisation of groups and so on, rest with individual headteachers and governing bodies. **You know your school communities, your site and your buildings best. You will be guided by your risk assessments and the control measures that need to be put in place when determining your start date.** Our agreement with you is that schools will be ready to start a phased opening between the 1 and 15 June. We will support schools who, following risk assessments believe that an even later date is necessary.
4. Decision about returning children to school cannot wait until a vaccine is available. We need to work in a context that weighs the overall costs of keeping schools closed, particularly for our most disadvantaged pupils, against the chances of increasing infection rates. We need to work to minimise the risks to our children, staff and families as best we can.
5. We appreciate that these will be difficult decisions requiring continued co-operation of staff and support from parents, carers, children and young people - the whole school community. We are here to support leaders in making informed and reasonable judgements, decisions based on the information available and to assist you in relationships with representatives of staff and your communities as appropriate.

The strength of partnership working between the council and schools, and between schools through existing networks, offers every school leader the opportunity to share their thinking and to test out approaches that will provide the best support possible for children and young people.

Working together

6. A high level of collaboration and cooperation will be needed to address the disproportionate impacts of the pandemic on staff, specific groups of children and families. Ealing has strong partnership structures to help re-build the resilience of schools, families and individuals. We want to support consistency of approaches adopted by schools throughout the transition to full recovery whilst recognising the variations in circumstances that might lead some schools to take different decisions.

We will ensure that governors, headteachers, senior and middle leaders in schools continue to have access to strong networks, support and resources from the partnership to support planning and capacity building. We will ensure that schools receive clear guidance to support their decision-making including planning frameworks, risk assessment tools and guidance for managing staff attendance and absence.

Principles and priorities – Primary schools

7. We propose that schools follow the following key principles in their planning in priority order:
 - i. Minimise the **risks of infection to pupils and staff** by prioritising risk assessment and frequent review cycles to test approaches.
 - ii. Offer full-time provision for **children of critical workers**.
 - iii. Continue to encourage **all vulnerable children and children with EHCP** to attend school in conjunction with individual risk assessments. Ensure that robust systems are in place for monitoring and supporting any children who remain at home.

- iv. Offer **full-time, phased-in provision, wherever possible** for the following groups: children in reception; children in Year 1 and children in Year 6. Offer some provision for nursery (N2) where possible. Introduce provision in stages and in a **priority sequence that works for your context** so that you are able to test out systems; new behavioural expectations and ensure staff receive appropriate training.
- v. Maintain a focus on providing **home learning guidance and support** for **all other pupils** because it is not yet clear when all pupils will be able to return to school but manage parents' expectations in conjunction with demands on staffing above.
- vi. Any further planning to open-up provision for all pupils in Years 2 to 5 would necessitate a complete review and a further audit of available staffing. It is not feasible for the small group model to run for all year groups so any plans for such groups would need to follow a relaxation of social distancing requirements announced by government. The conditions are not yet in place to support provision for these groups and schools would require sufficient lead-in time to prepare for any restricted return. We do not expect this to be before September.

Principles and priorities – Secondary schools

- 8. We propose that schools follow the following key principles in their planning in priority order:
 - i. Minimise the **risks of infection to pupils and staff** by prioritising risk assessment and frequent review cycles to test approaches.
 - ii. Offer full-time provision for **children of critical workers**.
 - iii. Actively encourage **all vulnerable children and children with EHCP** to attend schools in conjunction with individual risk assessments and ensure that robust systems are in place for monitoring and supporting any children who remain at home.
 - iv. **Offer face-to-face contact with Year 10 and Year 12 pupils** to support wellbeing, academic mentoring and detailed guidance that will support pupil progression in conjunction with the existing home learning provision developed by curriculum leaders. *(An agreed approach to follow)*

Maintain a focus on providing **home learning guidance and support** for **all other pupils** because it is not yet clear when all pupils will be able to return to school. Provide all **pupils with some feedback** on their learning and guidance to consolidation learning of key concepts and skills.

Principles and priorities – Special schools and Alternative Provision

- 9. We propose that schools/settings follow the following key principles in their planning in priority order:
 - i. Minimise the **risks of infection to pupils and staff** by prioritising risk assessment and frequent review cycles to test approaches.
 - ii. Offer full-time provision for **children of critical workers** where individual risk assessments allow.

- iii. Encourage increasing numbers of **vulnerable children and children with EHCP** to attend schools in conjunction with individual risk assessments and ensure that robust systems are in place for monitoring and supporting any children who remain at home.
- iv. In the case of Alternative Providers, increase the focus on Year 10 and Year 11 in secondary phase.

Operational guidance

10. We propose that schools follow the following operational guidelines:

- i. Plan for the maximum number of eligible pupils that could be expected against your phased plan and your audit of staffing so that you are prepared if initial numbers increase.
- ii. Plan using the “hierarchy of measures” approach set out in DfE guidelines and through your own risk assessments aiming to minimise, but not eradicate, contact and mixing of groups using the 2m guide wherever possible.
- iii. Manage expectations of parents, staff and pupils early by setting out the steps being taken to reintroduce groups of pupils in the order you have determined. **Provide an indication of expected return but only publish specific dates when you are fully prepared and subject to confirmation by government to proceed in relation to its key tests.**
- iv. Plan one-year group or one cycle at a time to induct pupils and parents in expected behaviours. Only introduce the next cycle when you are confident that the systems work.

Planning and Risk Assessment

- 11. We have produced an **initial planning framework** for reopening and a **generic risk assessment template** for use by schools. The purpose is to manage risk as effectively as we can. It is unrealistic to say that all risk will be eliminated. Within the template we have provided examples of recommended control measures and a residual risk score $(L \times I) + I$. That is, (Likelihood x Impact) + Impact after these measures are implemented. The template enables schools to add or delete current and recommended actions as the assessment needs to reflect the circumstances of your school.
- 12. We also intend to provide examples of room layouts for halls, practical rooms and classrooms of different sizes based on maintaining 2m distancing. All schools should have copies of their net capacity assessments which include sizes of rooms. However, nursery and primary-aged children cannot be expected to remain 2m apart from each other at all times. Schools are asked instead to work through a hierarchy of measures that culminate in reducing contact between children and staff and formulating consistent smaller groups or bubbles for play etc.
- 13. The documents attached are based on a range of sources including DfE guidance published up to 15th May, examples from schools and academy chains and Trades Unions. We have also benefitted from the input from colleagues across the Council (including public health), and members of the COVID-19 Schools Consultative Group. The council takes responsibility for the documents.
- 14. Staff and their representatives must be consulted on risk assessments and, once finalised, the assessment should be published.
- 15. Further guidance from the DfE is expected and we will keep you advised of important changes. We also welcome feedback from schools so that we can update and share practice across schools in the authority.

Individual Risk Assessments – pupils and staff

16. In addition to the generic risk assessment, schools will want to review risk assessments already completed. With respect to vulnerable pupils attending school, the assumption is now that they should attend school where it is safe for them to do so. With respect to staff, schools may have undertaken risk assessments for staff attending school who are either “clinically vulnerable” or “extremely clinically vulnerable” or who live in a household with people who are in one of those categories. These risk assessments may need to be updated to reflect the increase in people receiving notifications that they fall within the “extremely clinically vulnerable” category. Please refer to guidance on staffing.

Compliance

17. The government has set out a set of ambitions to support the return of greater numbers of pupils to school in June. We are asking every school to plan for the phased return of pupils and to evaluate what can be provided and by when in conjunction with a full risk assessment.
18. We recognise that not all schools will be able to meet all expectations because of their particular circumstances. We ask that school leaders discuss any significant issues with us and confirm alternative proposals. The leadership demonstrated by headteachers to date has been exemplary. We trust our schools to conduct thorough risk-assessments, to do their best to manage a phased return and to make the right decisions for their pupils and staff.

Support

19. In addition to the frameworks and tools designed to support schools’ planning attached with this document, schools will be able to access to following group and individual support:
- Bespoke support from **Ealing’s Health and Safety team** on risk assessment.
 - Support from **Primary Cluster Leads** and from **Quadrant Chairs** on delivery models.
 - Bespoke support for **headteachers in their first or second year** (Nigel Cook).
 - Bespoke support for schools in the Securing Good Programme – **link partners**.
 - Area-wide guidance on Year 6 to Year 7 transition in collaboration with school leaders.

Links to key documents

[Schools coronavirus planning framework](#) (Word doc)

[Risk assessment tool](#) (Word doc)

[Guidance for managing staff attendance and absence](#) (Word doc)

[Classroom, nursery and hall room layout examples](#) (pdf)

Best wishes,



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