

Information about the reopening of schools and colleges for families of children who have Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)

East Sussex schools and colleges look forward to welcoming all pupils, including those with SEND, back on Monday 8 March. School/college attendance will be compulsory for all pupils from 8 March, except those who are clinically vulnerable or self-isolating. Primary schools will reopen fully from this date and secondary schools will open with phased return arrangements during the first week, allowing them flexibility to consider how best to deliver asymptomatic testing – see below for more information about testing arrangements.

We recognise that as a parent or carer of a child with SEND, you may have additional concerns about your child's return to school or college. Whilst pupils with EHCPs should have been offered on-site education for the duration of lockdown, the full reopening of schools may present new challenges, and some pupils may not have been in school/college since last year. The return to full-time education is hugely important for children and young people's physical and mental wellbeing, as well as their education and development. Evidence shows that some children and young people's mental health and wellbeing were negatively affected when schools were closed. We want to reassure you that schools and colleges are doing all they can to ensure your child's return is successful.

Control measures

Schools and colleges will have a range of control measures in place to manage risks associated with COVID-19 and create a safe and secure environment. This includes:

- the use of face coverings in classrooms and communal areas by pupils in secondary schools and colleges, and staff in all settings
- repeated reminders to wash hands, ventilate occupied areas and maintain social distancing wherever possible
- recommendations for on-site testing for secondary-aged and college pupils (a maximum of three tests up to 3-5 days apart) in the first week back
- recommendations for home testing for secondary school and college pupils, and staff in all settings.

Testing in secondary schools and colleges

Rapid testing using Lateral Flow Devices (LFDs) is encouraged upon pupil's return, but it is voluntary and your child's attendance at school/college is not dependent upon their participation in testing.

Schools/colleges can provide up to three tests, between 3-5 days apart.

Secondary schools and colleges want to do their best to implement the new testing programme, but we recognise there are numerous logistical issues and concerns around disruption to learning as pupils return. Schools and colleges will face different challenges according to their specific circumstances and this means that there will be differences in the way that they roll out testing for their pupils.

Schools and colleges should aim to commence testing to any pupils who wish to receive them, with parent/carer consent, before the 12 March. Pupils will receive results of their test

within 30 minutes and will return to face-to-face education following their first negative test result.

Pupils and staff in secondary schools and colleges will also be provided with LFD test kits to test themselves twice weekly from home, these tests are also optional. Your child's school/college may be able to offer on-site LFD testing for pupils who are struggling to complete them at home.

Households, childcare and support bubbles of primary and secondary pupils and staff are also encouraged to access LFD testing twice-weekly. You can get a twice-weekly test:

- through your employer if they offer testing to employees
- at a local test site
- by collecting a home test kit from a test site
- by ordering a home test kit online.

Further information about household and bubble testing, including a link to the home test order portal, is available [on the DfE website](#).

EHCP/SEN support provision

Schools/colleges are committed to working collaboratively with pupils, parents, and other agencies to ensure all therapies and support that would normally be in place for your child are being delivered. The requirement for schools within the 2014 Children and Families Act to use their best endeavours to secure the special educational provision called for by the pupils' special educational needs remains in place.

Schools/colleges have been advised to identify pupils who are reluctant or anxious about attending, or who are at risk of disengagement, and draw on existing pastoral services and additional support from the Local Authority and the Department for Education to re-engage them.

Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing support

School and college staff are aware that some pupils may experience anxiety, stress, or depression in response to lockdown and the change to routine. Staff will work hard to support children and young people to contextualise their feelings as normal responses to an abnormal situation. Pastoral support offered to your child may include additional opportunities to engage with peers and rebuild friendships, signposting families to local support services, and supporting pupils with approaches to improve their physical and mental wellbeing.

Some pupils who have SEND will require extra help to cope with the changes in routine and settings are prepared to meet these needs, for example by using social stories. Local Authority services are also on hand to support pupils, families, and schools.

If you are worried about your child's wellbeing, please raise any concerns with their school/college. They will be able to discuss the plans the school/college has in place to ensure your child is safe and happy when they are on-site.

You can also discuss your concerns with a trained Educational Psychologist by calling the East Sussex EPS helpline: 01273 481967. An Education Psychologist will call you back between 2pm and 4pm on the next Monday, Wednesday or Friday that is available.

Further information and links to support services are available on the [East Sussex website](#).