

Supporting Vulnerable Pupils Return to School

Supporting pupils returning to school (COVID-19)

Contents	Page
Introduction	2
Early identification of pupils who may need additional support	2
Identification following return to school	3
Reducing the risk of exclusion	4
Accessing SEND and inclusion support	4
Training and staffing	4
Appendix A: Mitigating against potential exclusion	5

For further support please contact:

The Inclusion Team – inclusionteam@norfolk.gov.uk or call the Inclusion Helpline on 01603 307736.

Introduction

The purpose of this guidance is to help school leaders reflect on changes and adaptations that may need to be made for hard to reach and/or vulnerable pupils when they return to school in September 2020 following the extended period of absence due to COVID-19. It has been produced by Inclusion Advisers and the Norfolk STEPs team. The guidance acknowledges that settings will need to strategically plan and respond in a way appropriate to their context.

This guidance seeks to pose questions and, where appropriate, suggest strategies and avenues of support that will support planning for small groups and individual pupils who may find the return to formal education more challenging. It assumes planning for pupils will be informed by whole school, and where appropriate, pupil specific risk assessments.

It should be noted that this is an additional piece of guidance designed to complement the advice already available regarding the return to school for all children and young people provided in 'A Whole-School Approach – transition toolkit: recovery and learning' which provides guidance and supporting resources for settings to plan a post-pandemic return to schools. www.schools.norfolk.gov.uk/coronavirus/transition-after-pandemic

Additional advice regarding phase transfer following COVID-19 is also available.

Early identification of pupils who may need additional support

It is important that school leaders have systems in place to identify those pupils that may be more vulnerable on return to school and that individual planning for these pupils has taken place prior to September. These pupils are likely to fall into two categories:

1. Those pupils that have previously been identified as having vulnerabilities prior to COVID-19 e.g. pupils with SEND, pupils who are looked after or have social care involvement.
2. Those pupils that may have developed vulnerabilities due to COVID-19 e.g. those that have suffered a bereavement or have become isolated from their peers.

Pupil groups to consider	Suggestions for gathering information
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Pupils supported by a Behaviour Support Plan• Pupils currently open to social care with a C.P. or C.I.N. plan• Pupils supported via Early Help, FSP or by other agencies• Pupils with medical needs including mental health issues• Pupils with an EHCP / SEND support• Pupils that are Looked After• Pupils who are young carers• Pupils with previous attendance issues• Pupils currently on a Managed Move• Pupils who previously attended an SRB	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Information gained from on-line learning undertaken by the pupil• Parental feedback e.g. questionnaire, direct phone calls• Pupil feedback e.g. wishes and feelings, structured conversations• Professional feedback e.g. social worker, Early Help, CAMHS• Information received from feeder schools• Analysis of previous behaviour records• Safeguarding information• Feedback from other agencies working with the pupil or their family

Pupil groups to consider	Suggestions for gathering information
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pupils who have suffered a bereavement or significant change in home life during lockdown • Pupils who have become isolated from their peers due to COVID-19 	

It is critical that once early identification of pupils who may need additional support has taken place, thought is given to a needs-based, flexible approach to reintegration into school for those pupils most at risk.

Identification of need upon return to school

School leaders will need to be aware of the potential impact of Covid-19 on transition or returning to school for all pupils and have planned for how this will be managed. Pupils are likely to be affected in a number of ways and to differing degrees by worries related to, for example, new routines and expectations, loss of learning, friendship groups, moving on, lack of opportunity to say goodbye to previous settings and fears for their safety and that of their loved ones.

Taking the above into account, it is essential that school leaders have a clear picture of what the September arrangements and provision will look like. This should be clearly communicated to parents and pupils before the end of the summer term.

Pupil groups to consider	Suggested strategies
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All (potentially) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use online tools to familiarise pupils with new school layout • Pre-teach expected routines via home-school contact • Review current curriculum and adapt to meet the social and emotional needs of returning pupils • Provide opportunities for pupil voice • Provide opportunities for team building and rebuilding relationships • Include bespoke plans for those pupils who require additional support • Ensure that systems for rapid identification of those pupils who are struggling are in place • Have a planned and rapid response for pupils who are identified as struggling • The use of peer to peer support mechanisms

In addition to the above, pupils, staff and parents will have concerns regarding the potential risk of returning to school as a full cohort in September. It is important that school leaders ensure all pupils feel safe regarding the Covid-19 transmission reduction measures. In order to support this, it is advised that following is in place:

- The school's Covid-19 Risk Assessment is up to date and accessible
- Routines and expectations are shared with staff, parents and pupils at the earliest opportunity
- Adjustments in communication methods are made to ensure vulnerable pupils understand the new routines
- Measures in place to keep pupils safe are practised with pupils and modelled by staff where appropriate (e.g. social distancing, handwashing)
- Consistent response (e.g. scripts) are used by staff regarding reminders of safe practices
- Staff are trained to use de-escalation techniques to ensure any breaches in the new measures are managed effectively

The document 'Guidance to Support Positive Behaviour; *Supporting pupils returning to school (COVID-19)*' provides further advice related to this.

Reducing the risk of exclusion

A number of pupils may find the return to school challenging, therefore it is possible that school leaders may see an escalation in breaches of behaviour codes and disengagement from education. Early identification of concerns and a rapid, needs-based response will reduce the risk of exclusion and ensure that the pupil is supported effectively on their return to school.

Appendix A provides further information regarding specific concerns and suggested strategies.

Accessing SEND and Inclusion Support

Schools can continue to access free inclusion and SEND support and advice.

Please email inclusionteam@norfolk.gov.uk or call the Inclusion Helpline (01603 307736). Requests will be triaged, and support will be provided by the most appropriate team.

Additional Training

The Norfolk Steps Team are currently working on how training can be provided safely for everyone involved. Please contact the Inclusion Team by emailing inclusionteam@norfolk.gov.uk or call the Inclusion Helpline (01603 307736) for individual advice regarding this.

Other SEND and Inclusion support and training will also be provided wherever possible.

Appendix A – Mitigating against potential exclusion

Concern	Suggested strategies
<p>Disengagement and potential increase in challenging behaviours of pupils who have previously struggled to access education effectively</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement bespoke integration plans designed in collaboration with parents. • Ensure key contacts are identified and relationships are secure • Where possible plan ‘Virtual’ transition support before return to school • Consider how to reengage pupils via adaptations to the curriculum e.g. an initial SEMH package which draw upon pupils’ interests and allows for creative planning • Where lack of engagement may be stemming from anxiety linked to a return to learning ensure appropriate support is in place • Use of e.g. ‘Roots & Fruits’ analysis to identify barriers to engagement and translate this into bespoke planning • Identify particularly challenging lessons/free time and where possible adapt timetables to avoid these times until confidence and engagement are secure • Use planning tools to ensure that responses to behaviours are consistent and scripted • Encourage the use of ‘Kooth’ – free NCC commissioned online counselling service – to provide support for pupils aged 11 and over • Where appropriate use a multi-agency approach to ensure success
<p>Pupils who have been ‘happier at home’ who may struggle to re-engage with education leading to a potential increase in behaviour and attendance issues</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that key relationships are formed with named members of staff, this process should start before the pupil returns to school where possible • Unpick ‘why’ the pupil is happier at home and whether there may be unidentified learning needs? Are they happier being with parents and knowing they are safe? – as understanding this will enable interventions to be targeted more effectively. • Where appropriate, work with agencies involved with the family to undertake an analysis of need • Involve the young person and their family

Concern	Suggested strategies
	<p>in planning for return to school and address fears sensitively</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use an analysis such as ‘Roots and Fruits’ to identify barriers and translate this into bespoke planning • Ensure the effective, bespoke use of pastoral interventions and mental health support for the individual pupil are part of the bespoke plan • Identify particularly challenging lessons/free time and where possible adapt timetables to avoid these times until confidence and engagement are secure • Acknowledge feelings sensitively (pupil and parent) ‘I wonder if you are feeling...’ • If necessary, initiate a slow reintegration back into school initially combining a mixture of school learning and home learning to build trust and confidence • It is important to consider young carers specifically as they may be worried about parents who are shielding and/or parents may have become more reliant on them. Consider how they can be supported to manage these additional anxieties e.g. regular phone calls to home throughout the day • Encourage the use of ‘Kooth’ – free NCC commissioned online counselling service – to provide support for pupils aged 11 and over • Where appropriate, use a multi-agency approach to ensure success
<p>Pupils who have found lockdown particularly difficult due to e.g. bereavement, social care issues or being a young carer</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Give pupils a chance to talk about it if they want to using daily ‘check ins’/worry books etc. • Provide structure when in school – familiarity will help to offer containment • Identify and assign a key adult who is ‘attuned’ to their needs. Ensure there are regular ‘check ins’ which will help identify potential trigger points and enable school to adapt the day where appropriate • Support with emotional regulation • Ensure there is clear communication with parents to enable secure understanding of what has happened and how they would

Concern	Suggested strategies
	<p>like school to deal with difficult questions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plan (with the pupil) for what they need e.g. a safe space to have some quiet time, leaving lessons early, their day starting slightly later to assist with completing caring responsibilities, etc. • Use a tool such as 'Roots and Fruits' analysis to identify difficult experiences and feelings and plan support accordingly • Encourage the use of 'Kooth' – free NCC commissioned online counselling service – to provide support for pupils aged 11 and over • Consider referral to specialist support services e.g. Nelson's Journey
<p>Pupils who have traditionally struggled with access and behaviour in class settings who have managed better with individual/ small group approach over lockdown</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individual reintegration plans are key for this group of pupils (see above) • Where possible, replicate some small group activities for certain parts of the day, plan this for times of the day that the pupil previously found challenging • Build/re-build positive relationships by assigning a key worker, preferably somebody that has built a strong relationship with the pupil during lockdown • Use analysis tools such as 'Roots & Fruits' to determine where the pupil has struggled and has been most successful in the past and during lockdown - identify what is required for success i.e. what experience in school does the pupil need? • Use the Norfolk Steps planning tool (or similar) to match differentiated provision to outcomes of the analysis • Use scripts and strategies to disempower negative behaviours • Ensure that there is clear planning and preparation for transition back into full class-based learning that is bespoke to the pupil
<p>The cohort of pupils who have not had access to specialist services e.g. CAMHS over lockdown leading to an escalation in behaviours and families no longer engaging with services. This could be exacerbated by the backlog of cases specialist services will</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Target these pupils for support within schools through pastoral teams until specialist support can be accessed • Encourage the use of 'Kooth' – free NCC commissioned online counselling service – to provide support for pupils aged 11 and

Concern	Suggested strategies
be dealing with.	<p>over</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build/re-build positive relationships by assigning a key worker • Norfolk Steps de-escalation approaches should be used by all staff • Use 'Roots & Fruits' analysis (or similar) to identify causal factors around negative behaviour and to identify approaches to mitigate these • Use the Norfolk Steps planning model (or similar) to plan for the above • Use a system and model based on <i>educational consequences</i> rather than a <i>punishment</i> • Consider the use of <i>restorative approaches</i> rather than a punitive system of sanctions • Consider staff training in RPI as part of individual risk management planning where appropriate • Consider accessing Norfolk Steps phone support for parents where appropriate • Consider accessing Norfolk Steps 'Step On' training for parents alongside training for school staff

Further Support and Training

Schools can continue to access free inclusion and SEND support and advice through emailing inclusionteam@norfolk.gov.uk or by calling the Inclusion Helpline (01603 307736). Requests will be triaged, and support will be provided by the most appropriate team.