

## EDUCATION PROVISION DURING THE CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19) PANDEMIC



# Reaching Families

### Introduction

This fact sheet is to help summarise the education provision that is in place for children that are entitled to access an educational setting whilst the strict rules around 'staying at home' are in place. As you can imagine, this may change quickly dependent on whether the government tighten or relax the restrictions so keep checking back to the [Reaching Families Fact Sheets page](#) to ensure you have the most up to date information on this subject.

### Who is entitled to access an educational establishment?

Schools and all childcare providers are being asked to continue to provide care for a limited number of children - children who are vulnerable (see below for definition) and children whose parents are keyworkers (critical to the Covid-19 response) and therefore cannot be safely cared for at home.

There are currently plans to have a phased re-opening of schools from the 1st June 2020, which will begin with Early years (including nurseries and child-minders), Reception, Year 1 and Year 6; secondary schools, sixth form, and further education colleges to begin some face to face support with year 10 and 12 pupils; and all schools and childcare providers to continue to offer places to the priority groups – vulnerable children and children of critical workers.

### Definition of a Vulnerable Pupil

Vulnerable children include children who are supported by social care, those with safeguarding and welfare needs, including child in need plans, on child protection plans, 'looked after' children, young carers and disabled children. It may also include some children and young people with an education, health and care plan (EHCP). For more information, see the page on [guidance on vulnerable children and young people](#). If you have a hard copy of this factsheet you will need to type the following link into your browser: <https://bit.ly/3bMfWPD>.

Parents whose work is critical to the COVID-19 response (otherwise known as 'keyworkers') include those who work in health and social care and in other key sectors. For more information, see the page on [guidance for schools, childcare providers, colleges and Local Authorities in England](#). If you have a hard copy of this factsheet you will need to type the following link into your browser: <https://bit.ly/2X7ejrY>.

### What education is in place during this time?

School staff will be working hard to ensure adequate provision continues. The focus being more on 'care' rather than 'education', to ensure those children at home are not at a disadvantage.

### Will my child get all the provision in their EHCP?

The Department for Education provided an [updated guidance document on vulnerable children and young people](#) on the 27th March 2020. If you have a hard copy of this factsheet you will need to type the following link into your browser: <https://bit.ly/3bMfWPD>.

This guidance notes that the Coronavirus Act 2020 allows the Secretary of State, where appropriate, to temporarily lift the statutory duty on local authorities to maintain the precise provision in EHC plans; with local authorities needing instead to apply 'reasonable endeavours' (do their best) to support these children and their families.

During this outbreak, educational settings, local authorities, health bodies, parents and young people with SEND should work together to respond sensibly and flexibly to each individual's needs.



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### What is happening over what would have been the May half-term?

*(25th – 29th May for most West Sussex educational establishments)*

Schools and all childcare providers are being asked to remain open over the half term holidays to provide ongoing places to vulnerable children and those of keyworkers. Arrangements are being made for free school meals to continue for pupils who qualify. Only some will be open on Bank Holiday Monday so you will need to check with your child's setting.

### New requests for an EHC Needs Assessments

The Local Authority will consider these requests in line with the law. The [DfE provided guidance](#) which came into force on the 1st May 2020, which relaxes duties around statutory timeframes for EHC needs assessment where elements of the process are not practical for reasons related to COVID-19.

The Local Authority will continue to process assessments as quickly as possible and requires contributors to the process to consider other methods of assessment (virtual) to enable them to provide advice to the process. The Local Authority must have the correct advice to enable them to make a decision about the suitability of issuing an EHCP and to enable them to correctly populate such a plan. The SEN Assessment Team will keep families informed.

### EHC Needs Assessments already in progress

**Pupils who have yet to reach week 16 of the assessment** – The Local Authority will continue with the assessment as best it can but until the issue of a draft EHCP these pupils do not become part of the priority group for school attendance. At the point of agreeing a draft EHCP, discussions with parents/ school will take place regarding the wish for them to return to school.

**Pupils who have reached week 16 and have a draft EHCP** - If the pupil has a draft EHCP or the decision to draft an EHCP has been made then they meet the criteria for prioritised attendance at school and the assessment process will continue, subject to possible delays due to school closures.

### What about Annual Reviews?

It is advised that as far as possible the annual review process continues and required meetings use remote means (such as video, Skype or phone calls) to bring parties together. If, however, pupils and families are unwell or experiencing other significant challenges due to Covid-19, it would be best to agree to delay the review. For more information, please [look on the Local Offer to see the SEN Assessment Team's 'Information for families' document](#). It is in the West Sussex information section. If you have a hard copy of this fact sheet you will need to type the following link into your browser: <https://bit.ly/344hNwl>.

### Can my child still be excluded?

Current guidance remains in force; however, exclusion is a decision schools will not want to make if there is any other course of action as an alternative.

### Further reading and useful links

- **Gov.UK: Reopening of schools guidance for parents and carers**
- **DfE Coronavirus Helpline:** Telephone: 0800 046 8687  
Lines are open Monday to Friday from 8am to 6pm and weekends 10am to 4pm.
- **Supporting Children's Mental Health:** <https://bit.ly/3axL3hN>
- **For further information on coronavirus and SEND:** [www.reachingfamilies.org.uk/coronavirus.html](http://www.reachingfamilies.org.uk/coronavirus.html)
- **For further information on local SEND resources:** download *Making Sense of it All* from [www.reachingfamilies.org.uk/guides.html](http://www.reachingfamilies.org.uk/guides.html) or visit <https://westsussex.local-offer.org>





- **The Council for Disabled Children** have set up an email address for parent carers of children and young people with SEND to ask any questions about the impact of coronavirus - [CDCquestions@ncb.org.uk](mailto:CDCquestions@ncb.org.uk)
- To receive the **Council for Disabled Children's** FAQs newsflash please sign up to their mailing list, selecting the 'CDC Digest' option: <https://bit.ly/39GFc8B>.

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Our thanks to West Sussex SEND IAS Service and in particular, Parent Advisor, Claire Chapman for their help in producing this fact sheet. To find out more about West Sussex SEND IAS please visit: <https://westsussexsendias.org>.

