

1 July 2020

COVID-19 Pandemic Response – Update from York Schools

Covid catch up plan

The government announced a £1billion catch up plan to address the disruption to children's education during the Covid-19 pandemic on 19 June:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/billion-pound-covid-catch-up-plan-to-tackle-impact-of-lost-teaching-time>

It has been widely reported that this will provide schools with up to £90 for each pupil to fund catch up activities and additional money to deliver one to one tuition for Disadvantaged pupils. The government has not yet published the guidance for schools on delivering this plan, or the amount of money which each school receive. Parents/carers should not expect that £90 will be allocated to their child, or that they will definitely receive one to one tuition using this funding or through the National Tutoring Programme, which was also included in last week's announcement. The additional funding is to be spent across the next school year (September 2020 to July 2021) and we will develop our plans to use it when the government guidance has been published.

It has also been widely reported Schools could use catch up funding to run Summer Schools. In the absence of detailed information this would be very difficult to manage and there is little evidence of pupils catching up as a result of Summer Schools. In York, schools will only run Summer Holiday activities which are already established and run every year. We will pass on information to you about other activities, not provided by schools, available in the city during the holiday period.

Pupil transitions at the end of this school year

We know that parents/carers are rightly concerned about the impact on their children's progress because they have missed so much time in school. The Covid-19 pandemic means that no pupils have received the teaching and learning opportunities they would have done under normal conditions. Because all pupils have been affected, schools in York agree that they should all start school or move to their next year group in September 2020 as usual. We will be working throughout next year to ensure that key areas of learning which have been missed are covered and that all pupils are given every chance to catch up.

Places in school for the rest of this term

The government announced on 24 June that there would be a significant relaxation of lockdown arrangements from 4 July, including a reduction in social distancing from 2m if it is not viable to maintain 2m. At the moment, in Millthorpe School, we are able to maintain 2m social distance. The new guidance makes it clear that the government's plan is for all students to return to school in September and that further guidance will be published on this. From September the guidance on social distancing is expected to change again.

It has, however, already made clear statements about the expectations on schools for the rest of this term – *"We are unable to welcome back more children to secondary school at this time, beyond the face-to-face support schools can now offer year 10 and 12 pupils, and provision for vulnerable children and children of critical workers. We are not asking secondary schools with capacity to invite further year groups to return this term"*:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/preparing-for-the-wider-opening-of-schools-from-1-june/planning-guide-for-secondary-schools>

Hence we will not be inviting further year groups into school this term. It may be possible to invite some pupils in for meetings to discuss their progress, but because government guidance says that the number of pupils in school should be no more than the equivalent of 25% of Y10 (and Y12) the numbers may be small. The government has not yet published guidance for schools for opening next term. As soon as it does, we will be working to develop a plan for running the school in September which is safe for pupils, staff and families. We will keep you fully informed at every stage.

Best wishes

G Greenhalgh

Letter composed collaboratively with York Schools and Academies Board.