Transition 'staggered' start guidance

Despite the government's recent message that it expects all children to return to school in September, there has not yet been any national guidance on this. We understand that schools and families may be anxious about all children returning at once on the first day of term. We also recognise that there are established approaches to staggered starts for key year groups and for some pupils with SEND or specific vulnerabilities, who are transitioning to a new setting. We know that schools are planning additional transition arrangements this year to support these children and all children returning following a lengthy period of time away due to COVID-19. These arrangements will include an adjustment of the expectations of the curriculum in school in favour of more time in school. Please see **WSCC and E4S Curriculum Re-start Hub**.

We support school leaders in their ongoing need to make arrangements for the transition process and the emotional wellbeing of children, suitable to their own context and subject to their own risk assessment.

We recognise the additional pressure this places on individual schools and the need to inform parents and children of any arrangements in a timely manner. As a Local Authority we have spoken to some of our headteachers and identified the following principles which we hope will guide and support your decision making.

- We recognise that the return to school will need to be planned in order to maximise pupils' opportunities to learn and this is fundamentally linked to their emotional wellbeing.
- Our expectation would be that schools are planning all year groups from Y1 to Y11 to be fully returned within the first week (notwithstanding individual arrangements for some children with SEND or specific vulnerabilities).
- Reception Year arrangements are likely to incorporate a gradual build up of visits over time, and of increasing duration, with pupils fully in school within the first two weeks (notwithstanding individual arrangements for some children with SEND or specific vulnerabilities).
- Arrangements for children with SEND will need to be organised on an individual basis in consultation with parents. Again, specific arrangements will include an adjustment of the expectations of the curriculum in school in favour of more time in school. These adjustments will allow pupils to become familiar and comfortable with the routines of school alongside their peers.