



Bolton Parent Carers & Bolton Information Advisory Service

Working together for Bolton's SEND families

Joint Bulletin 16 - 10th July 2020

What has happened this week?

Well, the summer holidays are almost upon us, and some slight signs of normality are resuming. We've not yet ventured out the pubs, but we are all looking better groomed after a long awaited trip to the hairdressers- goodbye cousin it!

This week we have seen lots going on with education. Schools taking in the news of the full opening for students in September, planning how it will be done safely for our children, some transition work is underway now too. There has been a lot of discussion both locally and nationally about looking after children's emotional health and wellbeing when we return in September too. Lots of work will be happening between now and September in every educational setting, we are certain.

Last week we told you we would bring you some of the 'devil in the detail', so to speak, about the news we brought you on that full opening of schools. Hopefully, this will fill in some of the gaps you've been thinking about this last week. So find a quiet spot if you can, and read on....

We are off to get our nail appointments booked!



Government state all pupils will be returning to school in September .

We'll recap what we told you last week, and expand on the detail and reality

- All educational settings, including special schools and alternative providers, must reopen for all pupils at the start of the Autumn term after summer- however, this will need to take in to account both the safety and needs of our children. Some may be phased back in carefully, to allow children to get used to the new routines of school- especially if these are children who have maybe moved from one setting to another. Some may have staggered start and finish times to prevent masses of children arriving and leaving at the same time. Like lockdown school matters, its likely your child's school will decide how getting children back in is going to work best for that particular school and their particular children, so do speak to your child's school for further details if you haven't been advised yet.
- That it will be mandatory to send your child back to school. Only very few pupils will be exempt from this rule. As shielding advice is no longer in place for children and adults from 1st August, this will only apply to children who are following public health advice, such as isolating for possible covid infection, or, who remain under the care of a specialist health professional and have discussed their care with their health professional before returning to school in September.



Therefore, the overarching message is all children need to be back in school from September

So, what we can tell you is that the legal duty that says parents and carers must send their children to school, or risk further action (including fines), that was previously 'paused' because of Covid, **has been re enacted**- meaning that the duty is now back in place and the legal expectation is that parents and carers must send their children to school, or they could face consequences. *What we do know, is that schools will be considerate and understanding of the needs of some of our children, and that it isn't going to be easy for some of us to get our children back in to school.* **We would expect to see schools and families working together to help children get back to school.** If you are worried that this could be an issue for you in September, don't leave it until the first day back- speak to your child's school now and start those conversations early.

- School transport (including special school transport) is to be available. Social distancing on transport that is going directly to the school and is just for the use of the pupils (meaning it is NOT public transport), won't require social distancing as it is the same groups of children. However the guidance states that schools should consider how grouping children on school transport in their 'bubbles' could happen. This will be very difficult to do logistically for mainstream secondary schools, for example, and so we feel further guidance will likely be needed to clarify this for schools. However, children who use public transport to get to school will need to socially distance on vehicles and wear a mask (unless they are unable to for medical or sensory reasons). This is the law when using public transport. You will need to ensure that if your child is medically not exempt, they have a mask, and know how to use it before they start using the public transport system for school in September.
- Between Autumn 2020 and summer 2021, there will be a priority on filling in the lost learning gaps for children, and children will be assessed by their schools to see what the gaps are and plan for these appropriately- each school will have their own way of assessing and identifying areas that children returning to them in September, may have. As parents and carers of children with additional needs, we would encourage you to work with school to understand where your children are working at, and what things you can do collectively as a team, to support the child to progress. We know that every single child, in one way or another, will have been impacted by the loss of formal education. As such, schools are really clear on what they will need to be focusing on when children come back to them.
- Staff across the education sector will be supported to understand the implications covid has had on children's emotional and social needs, and should be planning to meet those needs in their schools come September- We have been aware of, and even attended ourselves, some training/ information sharing/ support webinars for practitioners to understand and support, children who may return with any emotional health and wellbeing issues. This is really high on everyone's agenda, and there is a vast amount of work happening in schools in planning for interventions, sessions, models of working, and approaches, for when their children return. IAS have directly offered our support to every secondary school in the borough, and will be developing our support offer to primary schools too over the summer.



- All SEN provision (both at SEN support and EHC level), will be delivered as it normally would. This includes services and professionals needed to deliver that support, being allowed into schools to deliver it- So all the duties that allowed EHC support to be relaxed, will have been lifted by the time children return to school. This means that whatever is written in to your child's EHC plan will need to be delivered again in its entirety as it was before.

Key Highlights...

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| Uniform | All children returning to school in September will be expected to wear their usual uniform in line with the government advice. The uniform does not need to be washed in any particular way, or any more frequently than it would usually have been washed for. |
| Behaviour in school | The behaviour policies will vary from school to school but the overall expectation is that schools should consider the behaviour of their students in light of the experiences they have lived through over lockdown. Behaviour policies can be amended or relaxed whilst children settle back into their new routines. |
| Classrooms | The advice states that bubbles can be expanded now to be for a full class of pupils, as opposed to the much smaller bubbles we have currently. Children's desks may be rearranged so what children sit side by side as opposed to face to face. Unnecessary items may be moved out of the classroom or made 'out of bounds'. |
| Whole school gatherings | Things such as assembly, collective worship and whole school breaks and lunch times should be avoided. |
| 2 metre rule in school? | The advice states that teachers should utilise social distancing measures from their pupils and other staff, in secondary schools. However, the guidance acknowledges that in primary schools and special schools, this isn't always appropriate or realistic, and that in these cases, being very close for the shortest time possible and not being directly face to face and very close, is a more realistic ideal. |
| School canteens and meals | Will be expected to be back up and fully operational for when children return to school. |
| Travel training for SEND children | Will be expected to be back up and fully operational for when children return to school |
| School trips and visits | Day time trips will be allowed as long as risk assessed appropriately. Overnight trips, even in the UK are not allowed at this time |



Bolton Council Educational Psychology Service Helpline

The Educational Psychology service helpline continues to operate. You can call them to discuss, for example, any concerns or questions you may have about your child and their education, or any matters regarding supporting them, meeting need, helping with emotional health in children..

The numbers for the helpline for the next 2 weeks, starting Monday 6th July, are as follows:

Monday 9.00am - 12.30pm – 07766 780373

Wednesday 1.00pm – 5.00pm - 07919 564919

Friday 9.00am – 12.30pm – 07768 352728

We also have this week's newsletter from Bolton's educational psychology team for you at the end of the bulletin. This week's topic is behaviour.



Using direct payments and employing PA's

The government guidance regarding using direct payments to employ PA's has been updated this week to also include easy read guides. By clicking the link below you can select which guidance you want to read. When reading it remember that many people employ PA's for personal care, hence the reference to PPE. Remember to follow all usual covid guidelines regarding symptoms and keep records of shift patterns in case of Test, Track and Trace implications. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-for-people-receiving-direct-payments>



Reminder on support available to you

Both the IAS and BPC websites have a wide range of resources and information to keep you up to date and busy throughout this time. You can find us at

www.iasbolton.com and www.boltonparents.org.uk

IAS and BPC are holding coffee mornings by Zoom. Each one is hosted by Frankie from Bolton Parent Carers. These are every Monday, Wednesday and Friday, from 11.30am until 12.30pm.

For more information visit www.boltonparents.org.uk/join-in

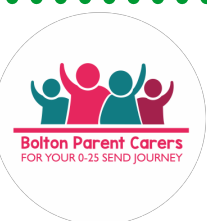
Our IAS 'natter and listen' service is still here for anyone who needs it- whether you just need some adult conversation, need to let off some steam, want some advice or reassurance, or just someone to call a friend to talk about your day, we are here. Simply text 07467943495 and we will arrange a call back for you whenever you want to talk. Cheryl, Nan, Mike and Karen are happy to help wherever we can.



Parent carer questionnaire

Thank you to everyone who completed our questionnaire about their experiences during the last few months. We are collating the response into one document that will be shared with local SEND leaders.

The prize draw will be done in the next couple of days and winners will be notified!



Co production Week 2020

This week marks *Co Production week 2020*. Coproduction for us a parent carer forum is where we ensure that everything we learn about parents and carers experiences is heard by local SEND leaders locally, and that our input strategically is valued and utilised by those leaders. We are very proud of our working relationship with SEND leaders in Bolton and throughout the pandemic we have continued representing parents and carers at a strategic level. Whilst here has been focus on issues that have arisen due to covid, there has also been an ongoing effort to continue with existing projects. So, come Autumn we are hoping to see the launch of a brand new SENCO handbook, a new SEN Support Framework guide for settings and even a revamped local offer website!

We celebrated co production week by coming together as a north west region last night for an online music quiz, with a co production theme, hosted by the national network of parent carer forums and Contact. Nan from BPC, was joined by Cheryl from IAS, Sue Cornwell, Head of SEND and Gill Murphy and Michelle Patton from the SEND Assessment service. Results will be in next week—but we also brought in a SEND young person with tremendous musical knowledge to help us out!! Whilst the adults had a good (competitive) laugh, the young person, a certain Frankie, took it very seriously and may be our saving grace!



We will be back next week for the last full bulletin before the summer break. Over the summer, if there are any important updates, we will bring you a bulletin, otherwise we will be taking a break for a couple of weeks. We will definitely be back in advance of the new school term though!

Stay well, and look after each other, Cheryl and the IAS team, and Nan and BPC

HM Government

Wash your hands with soap and water after being outdoors



Managing behaviour

Behaviour is communication

This week's newsletter aims to provide advice on how to understand your child's behaviour and to manage it. By better understanding how your child is feeling and what they are trying to tell you through their behaviour it is easier to manage it.

Positive strategies and keeping calm 'in fair weather' – child is calm



Positive attention, play and praise

Spending quality time with your child, even just 10 minutes a day of a child led play, activity, chat, can help to alleviate behaviour issues. **Praise** can go a long way to raise a child's self-esteem but only if they know what the praise is for and that you mean it. For example, "You're so helpful when you put your things away". Avoid adding "I wish you could do that all the time" as this takes the praise away. Keep rewards achievable and simple.

Keep expectations simple

If going through a tricky time (e.g. Covid-19) it is OK to have very few expectations, if needed just focus on the ones that keep everyone safe. It is normal for children to regress during a difficult time and to need more adult support or attention than usual for even simple tasks such as getting dressed. Accept that this may be the case and try and do things together or use picture cards of tasks to set a routine. Use clear and simple language.

Keeping things calm (and teach calming activities)

Try to find as many ways as you can to maintain calm through the day e.g. regular routines, time for rest, child's choice time, lots of warning before ending/changing activities, deep breathing, a 'private/personal' safe space for the child to go when they need quiet. Try modelling self-regulation (e.g. "that driver annoyed me, I am going to take 10 deep breaths" or "I'm feeling a bit sad today, I am going to do some colouring because it makes me feel better").



Strategies to use 'when there could be a storm' – you can see your child is becoming upset / angry

Divert and distract

Suggest a change of scenery or activity, e.g. calmly suggest "Shall we go outside and kick a ball" or start talking to them about something nice you have done together or that you are planning to do together. E.g. "I enjoyed watching Avengers with you the other day, Tony Starks suit was so clever..." However, using only distraction can sometimes make the child feel you are not listening to their frustrations.

Name feelings, empathise and problem solve

When you notice your child is frustrated, try naming their emotions, for example "I wonder if you are feeling frustrated because you can't find your toy? I feel frustrated too when I can't find something. Shall we look for it together?" Try to name and empathise before trying to solve the problem for them.

Sensory activities

Use repetitive sensory activities to calm children who are at the very early stages of becoming angry or upset, for example blowing bubbles or threading. Sometimes calling it a 'job' to help you is a strategy that can work to give children a sense of purpose and a 'get out' from an emotional state. Examples of such activities include: human shredder (ripping up your unwanted letters/ documents); helping with cooking (ripping up mushrooms, bread, kneading dough, sifting flour); sharpening pencils; cleaning toys (with a cloth and bowl of water/ water spray bottle); pouring or filling containers with pasta, rice, water; tidying and lining up items (toys, DVD, cups... anything).

Top up

At this stage try 'topping up' on the positive strategies described above. The more the better.



What to do 'in the storm' – the child is upset / angry



Be there for your child

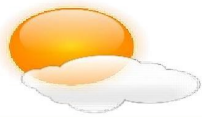
How you do this depends on your child. Some children will want you to hug them. Others may try and hit out if you get close, but still benefit from you watching them from afar. Some children may want to hear your soothing voice, so try reading aloud from a book in the same room as them. Others may scream "go away" and you may need to say "OK, I'm in the kitchen, I'm here for you when you need me" [then check-in every 5-10 minutes].

Are we safe?

Is the environment they are in safe? Do you need to move them away from a busy road? Do you need to remove objects from the room, or do you need to ask your other children to leave the room?

Remain calm yourself?

This is sometimes easier said than done. If you are getting angry yourself - if it is safe to do so - remove yourself from the situation and calm yourself. You could say "I need to go and take five minutes (or do a job) and will be back".



What to do 'after the storm' – the child is calming down

Make sure it really is over

The 'meltdown' may appear over, but your child may still be feeling horrible inside. The smallest thing could lead to another meltdown. Therefore, keep expectations low, keep everything calm, give your child a choice of what to do. e.g. "when you are ready, we could read or do some more deep breathing".

Help your child reflect, repair and reconnect

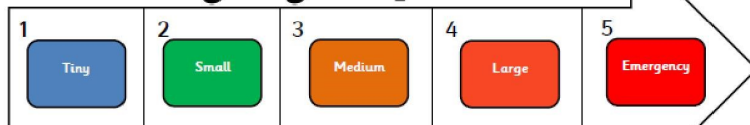
Once your child is calm, encourage them to tell you:

- "what happened?" (don't ask "why did you do that" as the child may answer and believe "because I am naughty/bad/etc.")
- "what were you thinking?"
- "what were you feeling?" (in their body)
- "how can we make this right?" or "how can we stop it happening again?". Establishing a language that you and your child can use to talk about problem solving and reactions can be helpful. Compare the size of the problem to the size of a reaction – do they match? Use the diagram to help them reflect.

If other siblings were involved listen to each them individually (using the same questions). Then help everyone listen to each other (only if they are all calm and able to do so).

Rather than a 'punishment', help your child to do something that repairs any damaged relationships. For example, if they broke their sibling's toy, you could agree to go with them to buy a replacement toy with their pocket money (everyone needs to agree this is a good idea and that this would be the end of the situation).

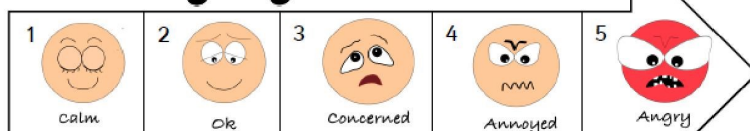
How big is your problem?



Do they
match?



How big is your reaction?



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Can you identify any triggers, and can you do anything about them?

After listening to your child, try to identify what the behaviour was trying to communicate.

Do things go wrong when your child is tired? Perhaps, schedule in one-to-one time with them at night. *Does your child get angry when it is too loud?* Can you get them to listen to calming music with earphones. *Does your child get stressed if you go shopping with them?* Could you do online shopping instead. *Does your child find it hard to share?* You could role play this with them.

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Need support?

Our COVID 19 community response line is now open offering vital help to people who need food or essential items

01204 337221

8.30am – 5.30pm Mon – Fri and Sat 9am – 1.30pm