

Let's Talk About back to school

Summary from May sessions



Attendees

16 parent carers representing 19 CYP ranging from 7 to 25+ years old

General Consensus

All children are different and the proposed flexible arrangement, of parents being able to choose whether their child can return to school or not, allows parent carers to make those individual decisions.

Key points

- Some families found that the support they received from school by various means has been better, more individual and usefully differentiated, than their child has ever experienced before.
- Children and young people (CYP) with learning difficulties often need frequent and consistent practice to gain skills. Many will need refresher courses on, for example, travel training, even if things return to 'normal'.
- Siblings of children with SEND have sometimes found lockdown additionally difficult and the whole family may be in real need, individually, of breaks or respite.
- Transitions are a concern for families approaching key moves. While some services and settings have been doing excellent work, others have not addressed this at all, and indeed, are themselves probably unsure about what will happen.
- There has been a huge variety in the frequency and quality with which schools have engaged with families. We heard of excellent and very poor communication.
- For some CYP, being at home has brought increased happiness and calmness as the stresses of school life, travelling (sometimes for a long time each day) and school behavioural expectations do not have to be dealt with.
- All families welcomed the possibility of increased flexibility – education for individuals, not an imaginary 'average' child.

Quotes

"Best support we have ever had with transition. We have had Zoom meetings with social care, health and special school staff to work through the transition from school together."

“We have felt more supported from sixth form than ever before. We’ve had more communication with them and feel that they have really listened and that they have finally started to understand my son.”

“School work is not differentiated for my son. We only heard from the SENCO, for the first time, last week”

“So many of our children can’t adhere to social distancing”

“The school model did not work for my daughter. It’s a huge relief that it’s now over.”

“I would like some respite”

“If COVID-19 came into this house and my partner caught it, I would not be able to cope with my son.”

“We have only received two phone calls from the [special] school since lockdown began – my son is in a class of nine children.”

“I have been told that staff will wear PPE. I’m not sure how this will work as there has been no preparation for my child as he goes back to school.”

“It’s not good for his mental health as he misses his friends”

“I have mixed feelings. I feel that it’s too soon but my son needs to go back to school. I need him to go back to school.”