

Prime Minister's statement on returning children to school

Press release

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Prime Minister Boris Johnson said:

I have previously spoken about the moral duty to reopen schools to all pupils safely, and I would like to thank the school staff who have spent the summer months making classrooms Covid-secure in preparation for a full return in September.

We have always been guided by our scientific and medical experts, and we now know far more about coronavirus than we did earlier this year.

As the Chief Medical Officer has said, the risk of contracting Covid-19 in school is very small and it is far more damaging for a child's development and their health and well-being to be away from school any longer.

This is why it's vitally important that we get our children back into the classroom to learn and to be with their friends. Nothing will have a greater effect on the life chances of our children than returning to school.

Background

Chief Medical Officers and Deputy Chief Medical Officers of England, Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales have made a statement on the evidence of

risks and benefits to health from schools and childcare settings reopening, which says:

- We are confident in the extensive evidence that there is an exceptionally small risk of children of primary or secondary school age dying from COVID-19. The infection fatality rate (proportion of those who are infected who die) for those aged 5 to 14 is estimated at 14 per million, lower than for most seasonal flu infections.
- We are confident that there is clear evidence of a very low rate of severe disease in children of primary and secondary school ages compared to adults, even if they catch COVID-19. The percentage of symptomatic cases requiring hospitalisation is estimated to be 0.1% for children aged 0 to 9 and 0.3% among those aged 10 to 19, compared to a hospitalisation rate of over 4% in the UK for the general population. Most of these children make a rapid recovery.
- We are confident that there is clear evidence from many studies that the great majority of children and teenagers who catch COVID-19 have mild symptoms or no symptoms at all.
- Control measures such as hand and surface hygiene, cohorting to reduce number of daily contacts, and directional controls to reduce face-to-face contact remain key elements of maintaining COVID-19 secure school environments and minimising risk.

Published 24 August 2020