

news release

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School attendance figures in West Sussex schools well above national average

The average number of children back in school in West Sussex since the COVID-19 lockdown began is well above the national average, according to the latest figures.

Nearly 22% of all pupils – a total of 25,226 – were back at maintained schools and academies across the county, according to figures from 2 July. This is significantly above the national average of 16.9%.

It comes almost exactly a month after the government asked schools to accommodate pupils from reception, year 1 and 6, alongside key worker and vulnerable pupils who have attended school throughout. The numbers of vulnerable children in West Sussex schools have been consistently higher than the national average during the pandemic.

Teachers, staff, pupils, parents and carers have been praised for their hard work, understanding and patience during a challenging time for schools.

Nigel Jupp, Cabinet member for Education & Skills, said: “I’ve been impressed greatly by the dedication of parents and carers who continue to look after their children and provide home schooling during these challenging and unprecedented times.

“I would also like to share my sincere thanks with schoolteachers and staff who have been in class with many vulnerable children as well as those of key workers. On top of this they have continued to provide excellent resources for home learning to those children who have not been able to return to their schools during the lockdown.

“I appreciate the frustrations of those who are eager to return, but we all share the same aim of seeing all children back in school from September.”

The council is assessing the government’s announcement on 2 July on plans to support the safe return of children to school and will be working closely with head teachers and other key stakeholders over the coming weeks to determine how this will be managed in West Sussex. Schools continue to be supported as they plan their future provision, based on their own risk assessments and local circumstances.

The figures based on returns on 2 July show 4,617 reception, 3,800 year 1 and 4,996 year 6 pupils attended school.

Schools across West Sussex have also continued to meet the needs of the children of critical workers and vulnerable children in all year groups during the COVID-19 outbreak.