Letter to parents and carers

WARRINGTON
Borough Council

Councillor Matt Smith
Cabinet Member, Children's Services

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Dear parents and carers

Warrington Borough Council plan for schools following the recent Government announcement

The Government announced recently that schools should prepare to open for more children, beginning on 1st June 2020. In Warrington our approach to this has been guided by our priority of keeping children and school staff as safe as possible and as a parent and teacher I know how important it is that we get this right. For this reason we are not asking our schools to open to more children on 1st June. Schools will remain open to vulnerable children and the children of critical workers. We would welcome more vulnerable children to attend in every year group at any time.

Schools have to undertake rigorous risk assessments before opening to more children. We need to allow sufficient time, so that this can be completed thoroughly and without undue pressure to meet an arbitrary deadline. There are many issues for schools to address, such as increased regular cleaning, increased hand washing facilities for children, provision of school meals, how break and lunchtimes will be organised and managing appropriate staffing levels. To rush this could put children and school staff at increased risk.

The scientific evidence put forward by the Government demonstrates a decreased risk of serious illness in young children from covid-19, but the evidence does not suggest that children are any less likely to pass the virus on to others. Infection rates in the North-West remain higher than those in many other parts of the country. Opening schools too early could have very serious consequences.

Therefore we have taken the following actions:

- We have asked schools to prepare to open to more children from 8th June at the earliest. This date is being kept under constant review and the date could be pushed back further if the local position requires it.

- We have asked schools to use a phased return model. So when the time is right to welcome more children back, we suggest they begin with a single year group before increasing further.

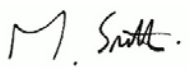
A school using a phased return model will have the time and space to consider how their new systems are working and modify them as required to keep children safe, before taking more children into their classrooms.

As part of the approach schools will, for example:

- Ensure that additional stringent cleaning is carried out every day so that when children leave, the spaces and resources they have used are thoroughly cleaned to reduce the risk spreading the virus.
- Put away resources that cannot be easily cleaned
- Keep children in small groups with the same adult whenever possible
- Consider if places are offered on a part time basis to allow as many children as possible to attend from the designated years groups
- Stagger break and lunchtimes to prevent larger groups mixing
- Have staggered times to drop off and collect children to reduce contact between different adults at the school gate
- Ask that only one adult accompanies children to school
- Plan for remote learning to continue for children unable to access their school

These decisions have been made following numerous discussions with schools, parents and trade unions. Our priority will remain the safety of our children and school staff, this should not be compromised.

Yours sincerely



Cllr. Matt Smith
Cabinet Member for Children's Services
Warrington Borough Council