

Dear Parent/Carer

I wanted to update you again with the outcomes of today's re-evaluation of the five tests within the Lancashire Authority. The decision has been taken to defer a decision on any further opening until the 15th June. I have included the full press statement based upon the advice of Dr Sakthi Karunanithi below.

However, I am concerned about the level of engagement of some of our students, especially those in Year 10. Developing good habits of home study will be very important, especially if much of their learning will continue to take place remotely into the new school year. Heads of House and Mr Morgan have been trying to contact the parents of students about whom we are most concerned to find out how we can support parents with getting their children to engage.

We do have plans in place and ready to go for Year 10. These will involve having a reintegration meeting with a member of staff to see where you are up to and so that our Year 10s can get a sense of what a return to school may look like. Clearly we are having to put these plans back until at least the 22nd June now.

We miss seeing our students hugely. With recent events in America and their spread to the UK we feel that we are missing so many opportunities to discuss important issues around social history, ethical actions and human compassion. As teachers we all came into the profession to make a difference to the lives of young people through education and we feel our ability to do this has been drastically impacted.

We all wish so much that we could just have the things that we used to take for granted back and that we could be bemoaning the lack of space in the corridors with the daily hustle and bustle of school life, our friends, our colleagues, our model students and our loveable rogues.

This time will return and we have to hold on to the hope that it will be able to happen sooner rather than later and that we will all be able to be kept safe when it does happen.

Mr Steven Haycocks

# Guidance to schools remains unchanged

The guidance from Lancashire County Council's Director of Public Health that schools should not open to more pupils remains unchanged.

Dr Sakthi Karunanithi has advised schools to delay reopening to Reception, Year 1 and Year 6 pupils because, in his professional view, two of the government's five coronavirus tests are not currently being met in the county. Although the number of new cases has decreased, Lancashire and the North West has a high number of cases compared to many other regions in the country.

Similarly, although the weekly death count in Lancashire is showing a downward trend, a consistent decline is not being seen in all areas, and in recent weeks we have seen an increase. It has also been widely reported that the R value for the North West is above 1.

There has been positive work between local organisations to plan for outbreaks in Lancashire, but better information sharing from the national to local level is still required.

Lancashire people have worked so hard throughout the epidemic in keeping the virus at bay. With various national lockdown measures lifting, we need to remain vigilant in following social distancing rules to help prevent the infection spreading.

The guidance, which also applies to early years settings such as nurseries and childminders, will be reviewed again on 15 June.

The decision to welcome back more pupils to Lancashire's schools lies with head teachers, in consultation with their board of governors, taking into account their individual circumstances. The county council works closely with schools to provide advice and support. As has been the case throughout the emergency, all schools are encouraged to admit vulnerable pupils and those of key workers as long as their risk assessments suggest it is safe to do so.

Dr Karunanithi said: "I have carefully considered all of the information and data and, for now, my advice remains unchanged. Although there are significantly fewer numbers of cases currently, I am concerned about the high level of infections in the county when compared with others parts of England. The death rates are not sustainably decreasing in the county, and reports that the R value is above 1 in the North West should be an early warning sign. It is important to stress that the R value is only one part of the overall picture, it appears to be rising in most parts of Lancashire.

"We still need better information sharing from national colleagues to help us unlock a successful test and track programme, although agencies are working well locally.

"Ultimately we all have a role to play in this – we must follow social distancing rules, practise good hand hygiene, and stay at home if we have a cough, fever, loss of smell or taste or when asked to do so by the contact tracing programme. If we all play our part – national government, local partners and the public – we can contain this virus."

County Councillor Philippa Williamson, Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Schools, said: "Everyone wants to see children back in school as soon as it is safe for this to happen and, although we are seeing some progress, we must support the professional judgement of our public health experts.

"Throughout this crisis our schools have been open to the children of key workers and vulnerable children and have also done a fantastic job in keeping in contact with parents and pupils and providing high quality online learning tools."

County Councillor Shaun Turner, Cabinet Member for Health and Wellbeing, added: "It is really encouraging that we are making progress with the local implementation of the NHS Test and Trace system. We will continue to raise with government the need for local experts to be better embedded into the national programme.

"The vast majority of Lancashire people have been magnificent throughout this crisis, but we all have a responsibility to continue to abide by the social distancing rules. There can be no let-up because if we all play our part we can stop coronavirus in its tracks and ultimately save lives."

For the latest information on schools, please read our schools coronavirus webpage at [www.lancashire.gov.uk/coronavirus-updates/schools/](http://www.lancashire.gov.uk/coronavirus-updates/schools/)

HEADTEACHER  
BALSHAW'S CHURCH OF ENGLAND HIGH SCHOOL

**Your Word is a lamp for my feet and a light on my path. (Psalm 119, vs 105)**