

Dear Parents and Carers,

We hope you and your families are safe and well in these very challenging times. Thank you for all your support for schools and childcare providers and for following advice to keep your children at home whenever possible.

I wanted to take the opportunity to provide further clarity and information following the Government's announcement that schools will re-open to some children so that we are able to work with you as we move forward and to clarify what you can expect to happen next.

The announcement stated that schools will reopen no earlier than the first of June to the following year groups; Nursery, Reception, Y1 and Y6 and that young people in Y10 and Y12 will have some face to face time with their teachers. It also stated that that special schools should look to welcome more children back but did not specify which year groups.

The Department for Education has since confirmed to us yesterday that whilst they have an ambition to re-open to those year groups, that their expectation is that those plans begin from the 1st June. It is not their expectation that all schools will be open to all of those year groups and offering full-time places from that date. They have acknowledged that this will be difficult for schools to manage consistently across every setting and will need to risk assess carefully before they plan for additional children to return.

The safety and welfare of your children, you as parents and all of our staff in schools and childcare providers is of paramount importance and whilst we are eager to get children back into education, we need to ensure that this is not putting them and others at increased risk of infection from Covid-19 at this time.

We are working through what these new proposals could look like with all of our school, college and setting leaders and will continue to work with and talk to central Government on our plans to ensure that children are invited back at the right time and when we can offer you as parents the reassurances you will need that your child will be safe.

We do appreciate that this may cause further frustration and anxiety for those families that need childcare so that they are able to return to work as soon as possible. We ask that you continue to be patient and work with your school and appreciate that these measures are to ensure your family remain safe.

Schools and some childcare providers will continue to remain open for the children of key workers and vulnerable children.

Each school has a different type of building, sizes of classrooms, layouts and availability of staff due to illness or shielding so each individual school will need to think carefully about their approach which means that this may be different in different schools. Each school will let you know about their arrangements as soon as they can. It may be useful to note that:

- Some schools/childcare providers may bring different year groups back to school on different dates.
- Some schools may bring children in gradually through a phased approach.
- Schools will need to make sure there are measures in place for hand washing and hygiene and will do the best they can to operate social distancing, but this cannot always be guaranteed, particularly with the youngest children.
- Schools will carefully check on how things go and may have to change arrangements as they go along, but they will keep you informed.
- Some schools may close over half term and on 1st June or beyond to allow for planning, a gradual return for some children, to make sure the building is as safe as possible and to train staff in the new arrangements, including the arrangements for health and safety.
- Some schools may close for a short period each week, for example an afternoon, to allow for thorough cleaning and for staff to prepare lessons.
- Each school will let you know about their own specific arrangements.
- The final decision about when and how children will return will remain with schools.

Schools will use their best endeavours to bring more children into school over the coming weeks whilst prioritising everyone's health and well-being and being guided by Government advice and Guidance for when it is safe to do so.

We would like to thank you for your kindness, understanding and ongoing patience at this very difficult time and I will update you as soon as I can when plans progress on the next steps in Wigan.

Cath Pealing
Assistant Director - Education



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