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Dear parent/carers

I hope you and your family are keeping as well as possible at this very difficult time.

I would like to update you on the work taking place between Kirklees Council and schools across the district after the recent government announcement about schools reopening.

As you know, schools have been closed to most pupils since March as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. However, the government have now stated that schools across England should prepare for pupils to start returning, possibly from June 1st 2020. This would begin with certain year groups and the government will base their final decision on infection rates around the country,

We are working very closely with schools and I can assure you that safety and wellbeing are the absolute priority. Schools and the local authority were already looking at how to reopen safely before the government made their announcement. This is continuing and, at every step, we are taking advice from experts in Public Health about how to minimise risk.

We are immensely grateful to Kirklees schools for the way they are supporting children, young people and families through the pandemic. At extremely short notice, they launched online learning platforms and began to teach and nurture children in a totally different way. Schools have met tough challenges and have also gone above and beyond in many other respects. Their work has been inspirational, we are proud of them and we value everything they do.

Our schools now face, perhaps, an even bigger challenge. The government's announcement means that, with the support of the council, they must plan to reopen to certain pupils in a way that keeps children, families and staff as safe as possible.

The government have stated that, at first, primary schools would reopen for children in Nursery, Reception, Year 1 and Year 6. Secondary schools and sixth form colleges would begin some face-to-face contact with pupils in Year 10 and Year 12, but this would supplement their current remote learning. Pupils in Year 10 and Year 12 are not expected to return on a full-time basis at this stage. Schools would also stay open for all children of key workers and children who are classed as vulnerable.

We absolutely understand that you may be very concerned. The government have said they will provide urgent guidance, which is regularly updated, and that each school will be able to manage this process in a way that best suits its needs.

Ultimately, schools will make their own decisions on how to start reopening, first for children in the eligible year groups and then in the future for all pupils. Every school is unique and every school will make its own plans, working alongside the council. The focus is on putting these arrangements in place and we know your school will contact you directly when they can share details. We are talking to schools about how they will support children who are returning, and also how they will support those who can't return at this time.

The government are encouraging children in the eligible year groups to attend school unless they are self-isolating or there are other reasons for absence (such as shielding due to health conditions). Siblings in other year groups will not be able to attend for the time being, unless they are classed as vulnerable or are the children of key workers.

The latest government advice to schools is to:

- Carry out a risk assessment before opening to more children - the assessment will directly address risks associated with Covid-19 so that sensible measures can be put in place to minimise risks for children and staff.
- Make sure pupils do not attend school if they, or a member of their household, have symptoms of Covid-19.
- Minimise contact by having smaller classes or group sizes and changing the layout of classrooms and other spaces.
- Reduce the possibility of mixing between groups, such as through staggered break and lunch times and by having staggered drop-off and collection times.
- Clean more often on frequently touched surfaces, such as door handles, handrails, table tops and equipment.
- Promote regular hand washing for 20 seconds and always aim to ensure the highest possible standards of hygiene.

The government have also published guidance for parents and carers and we would encourage you to read this important information. You can [click on this link to see the guidance](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/closure-of-educational-settings-information-for-parents-and-carers/reopening-schools-and-other-educational-settings-from-1-june) or you can access it at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/closure-of-educational-settings-information-for-parents-and-carers/reopening-schools-and-other-educational-settings-from-1-june>

The Covid-19 pandemic is an unprecedented situation for all of us. Schools will need some time to respond to this latest challenge and, together, we are carefully considering every question, every concern and all of the government updates. This includes all aspects of school life. I can assure you that nothing is more important to us than the safety of our children and young people.

Yours sincerely



Mel Meggs
Strategic Director for Children's Services