

To Parents/Carers of pupils attending  
Shropshire Schools

Shropshire Council  
Shirehall  
Abbey Foregate  
Shrewsbury  
Shropshire SY2 6ND

Date: 21 May 2020

My Ref: KB 1265

Your Ref

Dear Parents/Carers

We want to share with you the latest information about the phased re-opening of Shropshire schools. The Prime Minister announced on May 10<sup>th</sup> that it is the government's aim to consider widening the offer made by schools to extend provision to Nursery, Reception, Year 1 and Year 6 in primary schools. At the same time, secondary schools and colleges should seek to offer some face to face support for children and young people in year 10 and year 12 to supplement their remote education.

This is an anxious time for everyone. We know that we have seen a fall in COVID-19 cases nationally and lockdown has been a big part of this. In Shropshire numbers have remained stable. We also know that some families and children have found lockdown very difficult to cope with. Some will have been personally affected with loss and grief, others will have encountered financial challenges and we have all experienced change and uncertainty. The next stage is how we can now open things up gradually and sensibly so that we don't see an increase in cases locally.

The safety of children and staff is our priority. School leadership teams will be carrying out risk assessments to help them identify the approach that is right in your child's school. As a local authority we acknowledge that not all schools will be able to meet the government's ambitions immediately. Capacity in schools will vary and many schools will need to introduce a phased re-integration. This might affect the year groups that can attend and the days available. Schools will only invite pupils back once the protective measures outlined by the government have been put in place.

At present, there are no detailed plans for what education will be like for years 10 and 12. Special schools are being asked to follow the same protective measures as mainstream schools but are not being asked to prioritise particular year groups. Pupils who are shielded due to their medical vulnerability or who are at particular clinical risk, or who live in a household with someone who is shielded or otherwise clinically at risk should remain at home.

Schools will work very differently, at least for the rest of this term. Class sizes will be small and schools will implement social distancing as far as possible. This means

lessons may run differently, break times and lunch times may be staggered, school start and finish times may be different. If your child requires home to school transport, these arrangements will change as strict safety and social distancing arrangements will be applied on the vehicles. This will not be a one size fits all approach but will be tailored to your child's school. Inside the classroom pupils will form a 'social bubble' – spending time with the same group of children during lessons, break and lunch and working where possible with the same members of teaching staff. This is to reduce the risk of the virus spreading and protect pupils and staff.

We know that schools not being fully open can create difficulties for working parents especially when other family members such as grandparents are unable to provide childcare. Parents will undoubtedly have many questions around particular circumstances. We have created a set of frequently asked questions (FAQs) on the council website and also a dedicated telephone enquiry line (0345 678 9008).

We all agree that it will be good for children to return to school but it has to be when schools and parents are confident that this is safe. Shropshire Council continues to work closely with all schools who, we are sure that you agree, have performed a fantastic job under very difficult conditions.

Yours sincerely



Karen Bradshaw  
Executive Director of Children's Services



Rachel Robinson  
Director of Public Health