

10 June 2020

Dear Headteacher/Parent

Update on the phased wider opening of Cheshire East schools.

As promised, we have completed our review following information released on Friday 5 June 2020 that indicated that the R-value had increased marginally above 1 in the North West

A joint statement from the Cheshire and Merseyside Directors of Public Health on the phased re-opening of schools has now been issued. They have considered the phased returning of schools carefully, reviewing the latest available evidence and good practice. It is the view of the Cheshire and Merseyside Directors of Public Health that it was right to have paused to consider if there should be an expansion of the number of children coming back to school. However, the Cheshire and Merseyside Directors of Public Health support progressing plans for a phased return of Reception, Years 1 and 6 if it is deemed safe to do so. The full statement is published on our website which can be found at

<https://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/schools/schools.aspx>

We can therefore confirm that opening of schools should continue using the cautious but sensible approach outlined in our previous letter subject to risk assessments being in place. **We continue to support the current phased approach with schools starting to open to pupils from 15 June** starting with younger children as set out in the Department for Education guidance.

We have considered the views of representatives from early years colleagues, primary and secondary schools (with a mix of maintained and academies), the Dioceses, Trade Unions, Parent Carer Forum and the Department for Education in the review of our plans for the wider opening.

The following confirms the approach that Cheshire East Council asks all schools to adopt.

Primary Schools

Primary schools should continue to encourage children known to social workers and those with an education, health and care plan to attend and offer provision for children of key workers where this is required. **They should also welcome back nursery and reception pupils from 15th June, Year 1 from 22 June and Year 6 from 29 June where the school still has enough space to do so with social distancing in place.** This may vary between schools due to constraints of school buildings and staffing capacity. Schools should however offer as a minimum some sessions to Year 6 to allow pupils to say goodbye, celebrate their achievements and support them in planning for transition.

Please note the Secretary of **State for Education has announced on 9 June 2020** that all remaining primary school pupils will not be able to attend before the summer, which is in line with our previous approach where we stated we do not envisage a full return of all year groups by the end of the summer term.

Secondary Schools

Secondary schools should continue to encourage children known to social workers and those with an education, health and care plan to attend and offer provision for children of key workers where this is required. **They should also welcome back Year 10 and Year 12* pupils from 15 June 2020 for some face to face contact, with a maximum of 25% from the year group at any one time.**

***Year 11 for Alternative Provision.**

We ask that schools consider creating targeted provision for 'bubbles' of pupils who are vulnerable to underperformance or disengagement. For the remaining Year 10 and Year 12 pupils schools should offer some face to face academic/pastoral tutorial sessions with their form tutor or similar.

Schools should minimise contact and mixing, as far as possible, by keeping pupils in small groups for face to face support and keeping those groups as consistent as possible whilst in school.

Schools should consider the potential for broader social mixing outside school when deciding their approach and communicate with pupils about not socialising with each other in groups outside school.

Colleges

Colleges should continue to encourage children known to social workers and those with an education, health and care plan to attend and offer provision for children of key workers where this is required. In addition, where possible, they will offer face to face support for a small number of learners from 15th June 2020 in line with government guidelines.

Special School

Pupils will be encouraged to return to school based on a review of their individual risk assessment. Priority will be given to increasing places to children of key workers and children who have a social worker.

Schools will consider a phased approach to support a wider opening to children and young people which enables small groups to adjust to changes where this is appropriate from 15 June. Special Schools will steadily increase pupil numbers prioritising key transition groups. Schools will need to ensure social distances can be facilitated as far as possible, taking into consideration the staffing levels needed to support the pupils within each classroom.

Support for pupils not in school

We ask all schools to ensure support for children due to transition between schools in September while they remain at home. The local authority has provided information to support remote transition and we ask schools provide at least the minimum offer.

We also ask schools to review their home learning arrangements and support for wellbeing of children and young people. Schools should have regular contact with all children not invited back into school to encourage and support learning and wellbeing.

The Secretary of State for Education has announced that his department will set out a basic curriculum requirement for those children and young people not attending schools, and we will work with schools to implement this when it is published.

Next steps

We are also aware of the announcement for all pupils to return from September, but we await guidance from the Department for Education on their plans to enable this to happen.

Covid-19 has brought with it stress, uncertainty and anxiety for us all. We need to make sure any return to early years settings, schools and colleges is safe for children's physical and emotional well-being. All schools will have risk assessments and preparations for wider opening in place to enable the wider opening from Monday 15 June 2020.

We have worked closely with the Cheshire East Parent Carer Forum regarding the approach to supporting Children with an Education Health and Care plan to return to school and in developing records of temporary provision which include a risk assessment. All schools should contact parents by the end of June to discuss support arrangements. For further information see the Live well website <https://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/livewell/local-offer-for-children-with-sen-and-disabilities/send-developments/sending-you-the-news/temporary-amendments-to-ehc-plans.aspx>

We would like to reemphasise that there will be no pressure on parents to send their children to an early years setting, school or college and no fines applied to parents who decide not to send their children to school although we would encourage early years settings, schools and colleges to share with parents the safety measures they have in place so that they can make an informed decision.

We are aware that some parents may wish to share their view or comments on the arrangements and ask that all correspondence is sent to COVID19schoolplaces@cheshireeast.gov.uk. Please note our priority is to support schools with their arrangements for wider opening and we will not have capacity to respond to individual correspondence.

We would encourage you to speak to your school directly for regular updates and to discuss any matters relating to the return of your child /children to school.

Any updates from Cheshire East Council will be shared online at www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/schools.

In the meantime, please stay safe



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Skills



Mark Palethorpe
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