My ref: School Re-opening
Date: 17th May 2020
Contact: Jonathan Lewis
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To parents/carers of pupils in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Schools

People & Communities
Education Directorate

Dear Parent / Carer,

Last week, the government announced plans for schools to gradually admit further pupils from the start of June. School leaders are getting ready for this. The Local Authority, the Diocese and Academy Trusts are providing advice and guidance to help them and as responsible bodies, we will ratify the final decisions schools make over their plans to open. This will only happen when we have scientific advice that suggests that this is safe to do so.

Our top priority remains the safety of pupils, their families and school staff. The government is unlikely to confirm whether more pupils will be able to attend school until late May so within the next two weeks, schools will let parents know their proposed plans for a phased return of pupils, whenever that can happen. It is very unlikely that all schools plans will be the same as every school's context and circumstances are different. School Leaders will have to consider issues such as the size of classrooms and the availability of staff to work before agreeing their plans for reopening.

All schools will try to follow the government's advice at the appropriate time. Some schools may not be able to take many additional pupils on 1 June. In certain cases, following all of the government's guidelines would involve an unacceptable level of risk to pupils, staff and families. Where this is clear, I will support school leaders who need to take a different course. I know that schools will tell you about any such decisions, and the reasons for them, as quickly and clearly as they can.

Your child's experience at school will not be the same as it was before COVID-19. It is likely that some staff will be absent, perhaps because they are unwell or have family members at home who are being shielded. This might limit the length of the school day, or mean that some children can only attend part time. Your child may not be taught by their usual teacher. The curriculum taught in the school is also likely to be limited compared to what was provided prior to closure. Some areas of the school site might not be used and routines will be different, in order to promote 'social distancing.' The ways in which teaching assistants and others support pupils with SEND (Special Educational Needs or Disabilities) may change. Some schools may not be able to offer school meals initially. There may be other changes too.

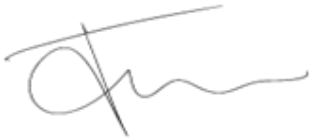
Schools will use their best endeavours to provide a safe environment for pupils and staff. However, no environment is, or can be, entirely without risk. I know that some parents will decide to keep their children at home on safety grounds. The government has made it clear that for the rest of this academic year, parents who do not send their children to school will not face fines or other sanctions. Education is however critical and high attendance helps pupils to learn, thrive and do well in later life.

With schools opening more widely, larger numbers of staff will be needed to provide face-to-face teaching at school. This means that it may be more difficult to maintain the same level of remote education provision for pupils in the year groups who are not eligible to attend, or for those pupils in year groups who are eligible to attend but who themselves cannot.

I would strongly encourage you to read the latest Department for Education guidance which can be found here - https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/closure-of-educational-settings-information-for-parents-and-carers/reopening-schools-and-other-educational-settings-from-1-june.

Headteachers have some very challenging decisions to make in the coming few weeks and I am sure you will support me in thanking them and their staff for their magnificent efforts they have made in continuing to support Education since this crisis started. I hope that when the time comes, we welcome as many more pupils back to school as is possible.

Yours sincerely,



Jonathan Lewis
Service Director – Education
Cambridgeshire County Council and Peterborough City Council