

Date: 21 May 2020



Children & Young People

Oldham Council, Civic Centre, Level 3,
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Tel: 0161 770 3468

Dear Parents and Carers

I am writing to you in my role as Oldham Council's Managing Director for Children and Young People and concerning the recent government announcement about increasing attendance at education settings in the Borough following the Covid-19 crisis.

Throughout the Covid-19 crisis, almost all Oldham schools have remained open, providing care for vulnerable children and the children of key workers. They have also been keeping in touch with vulnerable children and young people who are not in school; providing food for those children who are entitled to benefit-related free school meals and providing home school activities. We are extremely proud of the response from our schools, who have shown a very high level of care for their children, young people and communities.

A similar level of commitment has been shown by our early years' settings (nurseries, childminders etc.) who have been particularly flexible and accommodating in their response. Again, we are proud of the way in which this sector has responded to the challenges that Covid-19 has brought to Oldham.

Following the Prime Minister's announcement on 10 May, schools will potentially be open for children and young people in specific year groups on a phased basis from 1 June. The Government have asked that:

- All Primary schools to open for all children in Nursery, Reception, Year 1 and Year 6.
- Secondary schools, sixth forms, and further education colleges will begin some face to face support with Year 10 and Year 12 pupils, although it is not expected that these pupils will return on a full-time basis at this stage.
- All schools will continue to remain open for children of critical workers and vulnerable children in all year groups.

With regards to the safety of children, the Government has stated that:

- There is high scientific confidence that children of all ages have less severe symptoms than adults if they contract coronavirus and there is moderately high scientific

confidence that younger children are less likely to become unwell if infected with Coronavirus.

- Limiting the numbers of children going back to school and college initially then gradually increasing numbers, guided by scientific advice, reduces risk of increasing the rate of transmission.

The Government has advised school leaders to start planning for the wider opening of schools, which should include the following considerations:

- Conducting risk assessments so that sensible measures can be put in place to minimise those risks for children and staff.
- Ensuring that children and young people **do not attend** if they or a member of their household has symptoms of Coronavirus.
- Ensuring regular hand washing and good hygiene practices.
- More frequent cleaning on frequently touched surfaces, such as door handles, handrails, table tops, play equipment and toys.
- Minimising contact through smaller classes or group sizes and altering the environment as much as possible, such as changing the layout of classrooms.
- Reducing mixing between groups through timetable changes, such as staggered break and lunch times and by introducing staggered drop-off and collection times.

The Government is encouraging children in the eligible year groups to attend, unless they are self-isolating or there are other reasons for absence (such as shielding due to health conditions). Parents will not be fined for their children's non-attendance during these arrangements.

Further information for parents, including a series of frequently asked questions, can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/closure-of-educational-settings-information-for-parents-and-carers>

I know that Headteachers, Principals and their Governing Bodies are currently hard at work conducting the detailed planning required to allow their schools to welcome a wider number of year groups.

As such, the ways in which schools welcome back these year groups will look very different in different schools. Some year groups may move back into schools at different times, and during different parts of the school week, we would ask you to respect this. Decisions are being made on the basis of detailed risk assessments to support the safest return for your children. Furthermore, as circumstances change, school leaders may have to alter their plans at short notice.

You should know the safety of your children is the paramount concern of our school leaders. As soon as they can share their plans with you, they will do so.

Thank you for your time and patience.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Gerard Jones", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Gerard Jones
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