

Date: 21 May 2020



Children and Young People
Oldham Council, Civic Centre, Level 3,
West Street, Oldham, OL1 1UT

Tel: 0161 770 3468

Dear Colleagues,

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 developing wider attendance at education settings in the Borough.

Firstly, I would personally like to thank you and your teams. The work you have all have been doing in response to Covid-19 has been outstanding. This is a leadership challenge that none of us ever thought we would have to face, and I am continuously impressed by the way you and your staff have innovated with such speed and ingenuity. I also thank you on behalf of everyone in Oldham.

You, like I, will want to welcome more children and young people back into your schools and early years settings. However, children and young people should only return when it is safe for them to do so. The decision as to whether a school or early years setting can safely open more widely is one that is for Headteachers, managers and Principals to make jointly with their Governors/owners, working in close partnership with their Trust or Local Authority.

In Oldham, during the COVID-19 lockdown period, the majority of schools have remained open to vulnerable pupils and the children and young people of key workers (including throughout what should have been school holidays and Bank Holidays) and all schools and colleges have retained contact and an overview of all their pupils.

The Government's ambition is for a limited number of targeted year groups to start to transition back into schools and early years settings from 1 June. Whilst it is sensible to start doing the planning that will allow for a future phased opening, local circumstances and context matter. As such, I'm clear that:

- Safe solutions will look very different in each school and will be based on the detailed risk assessments you will be completing. Your school/settings will face unique challenges.
- A gradual and phased return to schools and settings will allow you, your staff, and children and their families to adapt to the new ways of working that you are rapidly developing.

- Particularly in our primary schools, it is unlikely that all children in the government-identified priority year groups will be able to attend school full-time from 1 June. Some schools may have to prioritise certain year groups, and not make an offer to them all.
- You should continue to prioritise the attendance of the children of key workers, and vulnerable children. It remains a priority that critical workers can provide vital services and that we safeguard those children that are most at risk.

It is also important that no leader feels isolated during this period. The Council and your Trusts are here to support you. The Education, Skills and Early Years team have already started working with your representative groups so that we can share thinking and support each other.

Finally, and to re-iterate my opening message, I am incredibly grateful for the leadership you have provided during this critical time. This challenge will be with us for a sustained period. Let's work together to ensure the best possible outcomes for Oldham's children and young people.

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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