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To: Parents and Carers

Dear Parents and Carers

15 May 2020

I write to you in my role as the Director for Children's Services in Nottinghamshire. This role is bound by some 200 statutory duties covering education and children's social care. My two most important and highest responsibilities are to safeguard children and to promote high standards in education. I can only do this by working closely with our schools and other educational settings.

On Sunday evening, the Prime Minister announced that he hoped that from the 1st June schools could be open for more children than they currently are. Today, and every day since the closure of schools began on the 23rd March, our schools have been offering safe places for children that the Government has described as vulnerable and to those of critical workers. This means that almost all of our schools are open, and more than 3,500 children have been attending. This, however, only represents 1 in 35 of Nottinghamshire pupils i.e. less than one child per "normal" class size.

The Government's plan "Our Plan to Rebuild" describes a stepped approach to recovery from the corona crisis. It describes how during Step 1, the step we are in, that schools should continue to offer places to that very specific group of vulnerable children and those of critical workers. It goes on to explain that as we enter Step 2, which they hope will start no earlier than the 1st June 2020, if and only if their five conditions allow, that more children could return to school. The plan announced on Sunday has been followed by guidance for schools and parents published each day this week and that for parents can be accessed 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>. This guidance describes what schools need to put in place, in order to, increase places. The Government's guidance prioritises the following years in this order

- Foundation 1/Nursery
- Foundation 2/Nursery
- Year 1
- Year 6

It also describes some conditions regarding the availability of staff and the physical environment recommended, including but not exhaustively...

- What staff are available including Head/Deputy, paediatric first aider, care takers etc
- Rooms available to accommodate a maximum class size of 15 pupils
- Be able to exercise some level of social distancing **but does not require distancing of 2 meters**

Nottinghamshire County Council, County Hall, West Bridgford, Nottingham NG2 7QP

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- Staggered starts and ending of school days

Since Sunday night's announcement, I have offered during 9 one hour meetings, the opportunity for **every** Headteacher in the County to share their experiences of the last couple of months, ask for first reactions to the Government's plan and to begin to individually and collectively plan for the future opening of schools to more pupils during, and, if we move to Step 2. The first stage of this is for schools to undertake a risk assessment, as described in the Government guidance, to identify what is possible and by when. It is important to stress that that is unlikely to be the 1st June. The Government guidance recognises that its ambition of opening all those year groups listed above may not be possible for all schools and that small schools and stand-alone Infant schools, in particular, may struggle to do so. The guidance does not support year groups returning part-time.

I and my colleagues believe that the best people to reach a decision as to what all of this means to your child's school and when your child is likely to return to school is not those, like me, working from County Hall, but those professionals who know your children, their staff and their school best i.e. your Headteachers. I have therefore asked them to undertake this assessment and reach a plan that is manageable, practicable and safe for your child, other children, their families and staff. Ultimately, this means that each school plan will be unique to that setting and may change over time. **I have every confidence that they will do so, placing the wellbeing of your children at the very centre of the assessment and plan.**

In later stages of the Government plan, conditions allowing, they hope to have all primary school children in school, they say, for the last four weeks of this term and some "face to face" teaching with Years 10 and 12 in secondary. There are no plans for children in current years 7,8,9 or 11 (unless perceived to be vulnerable or those of critical workers) to return before September and therefore, remote teaching will continue.

I am very proud to lead and work in Nottinghamshire; we have a strong sense of community and a determination to work together to find solutions to challenges and to support each other. Making plans for a gradual and phased return to school is our next step and there is much to consider and prepare. Your help in explaining this next phase to your children is greatly appreciated.

Please continue to follow Government guidance about how to stay safe during this Covid crisis. This guidance is changing rapidly at this time and therefore information from your headteacher is likely to change over the coming days. Your child's school will keep you updated during the next week about emerging plans for June in relation to your child/children.

Yours faithfully



COLIN PETTIGREW
Corporate Director
Children, Young People and Schools
Nottinghamshire County Council