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May 2020

Dear Parent/Carer,

Plans to reopen schools

We are writing to you following the announcement on Sunday 10 May by the Prime Minister explaining plans begin to reopen schools *from* 1 June.

The Prime Minister said that children from Nursery, reception, Year 1 and Year 6 could begin going back to school. This is in addition to children from vulnerable groups and children of essential workers. Secondary schools have also been asked to offer some face-to-face support to supplement the remote education of year 10 and year 12 students who are due to take key exams next year.

We have been discussing and planning this with Headteachers, Early Years Settings, Academy Trusts, Trade Unions and other Local Authorities across the region how this could be achieved safely.

We will adopt a tailored approach so schools can respond to their specific circumstances. As such, individual schools, and school clusters, will make their own decisions about how and when they can safely open, and to which groups of pupils from those specified by the Prime Minister.

We have worked with schools and early years settings throughout this challenging time and will continue its support by providing a risk based assessment process schools can follow to ensure they consider all the issues carefully before reaching a decision. This includes things like: how social distancing can be implemented, site safety, the availability of staff and resources, safe transport, emergency procedures and supplies of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), mostly in the form of hand sanitiser, gloves and face masks.

We are clear that safety must be the most important factor for schools deciding when and how to open. We are working with Public Health England, Cumbria's Director of Public Health, and the NHS to ensure schools get the best advice.

It is important to understand that this means there will be different arrangements in different schools, even in the same area, and it is vital that you carefully read the communications from your child's school or early years setting about what is happening locally.

School transport is unlikely to be available as normal and parents may have to make their own arrangements. We are working with school transport providers to put new and safe arrangements in place but this will take time.

We understand that there will be questions, and neither the council nor your child's school will necessarily have all the answers yet, but we are working together closely and things will become clearer as we move forward.

Finally, the government have said that for the duration of the current situation, parents and carers will not be penalised if they decide not to send their children back to school. So the final decision about whether or not your child attends school is yours. We believe this is right and proper given the variation in families' circumstances. Please make sure your child's school is aware of your plans.

Thank you for your patience, and remember to read all communications from your child's school.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'John Readman', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

John Readman
Executive Director – People
(Deputy Chief Executive)

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Dan Barton', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Dan Barton
Assistant Director – Education & Skills