

21 May 2020

LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC HEALTH

Dear Parent/ Carer

Thank you for taking the time to read this letter.

With your headteacher, we are working hard to do what we can to support the gradual return of the county's children back to school and to protect their health and the health of all the staff in our schools.

This is an anxious time for everyone and as a parent, everyone wants what is best for the physical and mental health and wellbeing of their child and their family. We know that we have seen a fall in COVID-19 cases and lock-down guidance and restrictions have been a big part of this. We also know that some families and children have found lockdown very difficult to cope with. So, the next stage is how we can open things up gradually and sensibly so that we don't see a big increase in cases locally.

The plans that our schools have put in place will help support children back into school gradually with the right steps to reduce the risks of COVID-19 as far as we can. This includes practical steps such as keeping the number of children down at first, continuing with hand washing and making sure that any children who are ill do not come into school.

When schools do re-open they will look slightly different and the way that pupils attend is likely to be different to how things worked before. Class sizes will be small (15 pupils or less), schools will be working, where possible, to implement social distancing. This means lessons may run differently, break times and lunch times may be staggered, school start and finish times may be different. This will not be a one size fits all approach but will be tailored to your child's school.

Inside the classroom pupils will form a 'social bubble' – spending time with the same group of children during lessons, break and lunch and working where possible with the same members of teaching staff. This is to reduce the risk of the virus spreading and protect pupils and staff.

This is a new virus and doctors and scientists are learning more about it all the time. We are following the rest of the world in gradually re-opening schools in phases and learning from the experiences of places that have already opened up their primary schools.

What we do know from the UK and lots of other countries is that children and young people who have Covid-19 usually have a mild to moderate illness and that many may show very few signs of being ill. During the first peak of this pandemic, very few children across the whole of the West Midlands have needed medical attention for COVID-19 in hospital and

those that have, have often had other major health conditions. Special arrangements will be made for any children who have health conditions which make them more at risk.

We are also learning more about how much children pass on the virus and although there is more to learn about this, scientists do not think that children spread COVID-19 very quickly like they do for flu and winter vomiting bugs.

We will continue to make sure that the plans schools have in place change when they need to and that we manage this as safely and sensitively as we can and would like to thank you for everything you are doing.

Yours faithfully



Dr Shade Agboola MBBS, FPH, PhD
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*Working for
Warwickshire*