

Director of Children and Families
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20 May 2020

Children Returning to Schools

Dear Parent(s)/Carer(s)

During these difficult times, I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for the role you have played in home-schooling your children. I know that it isn't an easy task when trying to juggle many other commitments too!

As you are aware, the Government recently announced plans for children in certain year groups to return to primary school from June 1st provided five key tests are met. They have requested that children in nursery, reception, year 1 and year 6 are the first children to return. The Government will confirm if the five key tests have been met sometime in the next ten days.

It is also expected that all vulnerable children should return if they have not already done so and if it is safe to do so. For children with an Education, Health and Care plan, their individual risk assessment should be reviewed and if their needs can be met as safely or more safely in an education environment then they should attend. If the risk assessment shows they cannot attend safely your school will support you in identifying what provision can be put into place.

I'm sure you understand that school leaders have a significant range of factors to take into account when deciding if they can safely increase the number of children returning to school.

In Leeds, we have asked head teachers to look at the situation in their own school and decide what is safe for your child. We do not expect that all schools in Leeds will be in a position to welcome back all children in the eligible year groups due to each school's unique set of circumstances.

Some schools, for example, may have a large number of staff who are shielding and therefore have to stay at home. Some schools have limited space, or small classrooms, meaning that social distancing is difficult. Other schools may have significant numbers of vulnerable children or children of key workers, resulting in not enough staff or rooms to take any more pupils. School Leaders will inform you of their plans for the phased opening of your school. They will also be regularly reviewing the situation and will let you know when they are in a position take more children.

June 1st is the earliest date that a school can begin a phased return of children to school. This date, however, may not be the date that your school begins their phased return. There may be circumstances, for example, where school leaders have not had the opportunity to adequately consult with all staff about Health and Safety issues and procedures by that time or it may be that schools need additional time to 'set-up' and organise the school prior to the children's return.

What this means is that in Leeds each school may be doing something different. I know that this may be frustrating to some parents and carers when you are anxious for your child to return to school.

I am writing to ask you to be respectful of the decision made by the head teacher of your child's school, in the knowledge that their decision has been made with the safety of all children and staff at its heart.

Schools will continue to look at whether more children can be welcomed back as the weeks go on and will communicate this to you if that is the case.

In the meantime, teachers continue to provide work for children who will still be at home.

I thank you in advance for your patience during these difficult times. I hope you and your families stay safe and well.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Saleem Tariq', with a horizontal line underneath.

Saleem Tariq OBE
Director, Children and Families