

OLDHAM COUNCIL



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14.5.2020
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Head teacher
Mr M Roberts

Dear Parent/ carer,

CONDITIONAL return of pupils in Nursery, Reception, Year 1 & Year 6 (in this order)

Government announcements, 10.5.20 & 11.5.20:

I am sure you have heard the Government announcement made on Sunday evening (supplemented again on Monday night with 'new' information) of a 'conditional' phased return to school for specific children. At the very earliest this would be Monday 1st June should the Government consider it safe to do so. Specific guidance has now also been published. 'Implementing Protective Measures in Education and Childcare settings' can be accessed by the link below:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-implementing-protective-measures-in-education-and-childcare-settings/coronavirus-covid-19-implementing-protective-measures-in-education-and-childcare-settings>

Limehurst recognises that our children have been out of formal education for several weeks but understand that this has been necessary. We have continued to provide daily learning for all our children and have provided 'school care' for vulnerable children and the children of key workers who could not be safely looked after at home during 'working hours'.

Current position, 14.5.20:

- The Government have announced the possible planned re-opening of school for Nursery, Reception, Year 1 and Year 6 children (in that order of priority) with effect from Monday 1st June, subject to a significant number of conditions being met
- They have also announced an ambition that all primary children will be in school for the month prior to the summer break

Next Steps:

School is now considering the substantial specific guidance received to plan our next steps. This is likely to be very challenging but included below and overleaf are some initial observations.

Oldham and logistics specific to Limehurst

As it stands currently, Oldham remains an area with a significantly high infection rate and this may create some difficulties when we start to ease our lockdown restrictions.



In addition, the Manchester Evening News reported recently that Oldham was in the top 15 'hotspots' for the rate of infection in England.

The Government is suggesting that children are taught in groups of no more than 15 and ideally groups smaller than this. The return of our Nursery cohort, Reception cohort, Year 1 cohort, Year 6 cohort and the current group of vulnerable children and children of key workers would potentially realise a return to school for approximately 180 children (this would equate to approximately 12 groups of pupils using the Government suggested 15 pupils to a group). To meet the social distancing requirements (2 metres between each child) each group of 15 pupils would require at least two classrooms. To accommodate this scenario Limehurst would require 24 'appropriate' teaching areas and enough 'available' staff to supervise 24 groups. **THIS IS NOT FEASIBLE.**

Solution:

Any future return to school as outlined by the Government will likely be on a rota basis. This could potentially be arranged in several different ways including:

- Splitting the school week up to different Year groups i.e. different days for different year groups
- Alternating weeks for attendance
- Alternating days for attendance

In addition to the above it is highly likely that school will need to introduce 'staggered' start and finish times (dependent on specific rota chosen) to ensure the 'foot fall' to school is minimised. The Government have already stated in their guidance that only one parent will be allowed to escort a child to school if they are too young to walk to school independently. Any potential return must be based on 'risk assessment'.

There are clearly many other issues which will present challenges going forward. I want to share some of these challenges with you at this initial stage for you to understand the difficulties we are likely to face in the forthcoming weeks. I also want to point out that school will look and feel a completely different place. To meet to the Government guidelines, listed below are some (not all) of the change schools will need to make:

1. Desks and seats need to be separated (2 metres distance) between them, if possible. This is not practical in Nursery or Reception.
2. Timetable change. Plan outdoor lessons (weather permitting- although schools have been instructed to remove outdoor equipment/ apparatus/ play equipment/ climbing frames unless they can be cleaned between each group and at the end of each day). Not the normal curriculum to be delivered.
3. Group size should be no more than 15 pupils in one a classroom at a time
4. Groups are to remain/ stick to one room during the day (this will mean a school or home packed lunch will be eaten in classrooms)
5. 'Groups' of children must not mix together or come into contact
6. Removal of soft furnishing and resources (including toys and Lego etc.) if they cannot be easily cleaned
7. Toilet breaks to be 'limited' to ensure children do not gather at the toilets
8. Break time to be staggered to ensure each 'group' of pupils do not mix together
9. Same staff to work with their 'groups' as much as possible. This may result in some pupils being re-assigned a new teacher



As a school, we will clearly do all we can to meet the challenges ahead subject to the observations above and a closer examination and consideration of the guidance recent issued by the Government.

Importantly, please note that the guidance issued by the Government has no scientific 'substance'. There has been no assessment made as to whether these measures will be successful/ effective in reducing the rate of infection. In addition, the Department for Education have no idea why Nursery children, Reception children and children in Year 1 have been chosen to return to school first- this was a central Government cabinet decision- again there is no scientific advice to support this decision.

Step one

Our first tentative step forward will be to contact parents/ carers to ascertain your thoughts, concerns and opinions on a potential return to school for pupils in Nursery, Reception, Year 1 and Year 6. This information will then be fed into the appropriate risk assessment to decide on a potential 'model' to re-open school at some point in the future, to some groups of children.

We know parents have genuine safety concerns in regard their child returning to school. To this end the Government have already stated that no parent/ carer will be fined for non-attendance at this time.

In the meantime, should any parent wish to express their view in regard a return to school for their child please use the lines of communication already established. Nursery and Reception via Facebook. Year 1 via Facebook and 'direct' email accounts to their child's class teacher. Year 6 via 'direct' email account to their child's class teacher.

Alternatively, please use the school email address on the letter head. Your view may be a simple statement of intent upon potential return- either 'yes' I think it is now safe and my child will be returning to school or 'no' I do not think it is safe and my child will not return to school yet.

To re-iterate. Upon any conditional re-opening to specific groups of pupils, Limehurst will look and feel completely different. Even at the most optimistic outlook, it is likely children will return on a rota basis and not 5 'full' days a week (week on week). Please note that Monday 1st June is an aspirational return date- there are significant challenges to overcome before this date to ensure a safe return for the whole Limehurst community.

This is an evolving situation and I will keep you informed with any additional guidance (this is expected) and with our plans going forward. Apologies for the length of this letter and if it comes across as unduly pessimistic. I wish you all well at this difficult time and look forward to that day in the future when school life can SAFELY return to some sort of normality and our children can once more continue their journey to a bright future.

I wish you well. Stay safe. Let's work together.

Yours sincerely,

Mr M Roberts
Head teacher

