

Our ref:  
SE/HE

Service:  
Children's Services

Direct Line:  
01384 812032

Date:  
18<sup>th</sup> May 2020

**Private & Confidential**

Parent/Carer

Dear Parent/Carer

We wanted to contact you about the phased re-opening of Dudley schools for more pupils. As you will be aware, almost every school in Dudley has remained open during this lockdown period for qualifying pupils. I am sure you have heard that the government has now issued further guidance allowing more children to safely return to school. Many of you will have questions about what this means for your child.

Firstly, we wanted to reassure you that the key priority for the council and schools is to ensure the safety of your child. Your school leadership team is currently undertaking a detailed risk assessment and putting in place a range of protective measures before they will open their doors to more pupils. They are planning for changes that are as supportive as possible for children and families, whilst being manageable for the school.

The government has set an ambition for more pupils to begin to return to school from the 1<sup>st</sup> June and they have been clear about the priority order of pupils. We anticipate that many schools will need to use that first week in June to ensure they are completely ready for more pupils to attend, therefore start dates may be staggered during that week or week beginning the 8<sup>th</sup> June 2020.

The priority groups outlined by the government are set out below:

- The children of key workers and pupils who already qualify for a place under current government guidance
- Nursery aged pupils
- Reception aged pupils
- Pupils in year 1 and year 6.

Schools will only invite pupils back once the protective measures outlined by the government have been put in place. This means that the capacity in schools will vary across the borough at different times. At present, there are no confirmed plans for when or how secondary pupils (and in particular those currently in years 10 and 12) will return to school. Special schools are being asked to follow the same protective measures as mainstream schools but are not being asked to prioritise particular year groups.

The government has been clear that pupils who are shielded due to their medical vulnerability or who are at particular clinical risk, or who live in a household with someone who is shielded or otherwise clinically at risk should remain at home.

The council is working closely with your Headteacher, who I am sure you will agree is doing an amazing job in these unprecedented times. We are all responding to new guidance as it emerges and therefore the situation remains changeable.

Your child's school will be contacting you if they are in one of the priority groups outlined above in order to invite them to return once they are ready to receive additional pupils. Clearly we all share the view that it will be positive for children to be back in school, but this has to be when schools and you as parents are reassured that this will be safe. This is why the government is encouraging parents to support the phased return to school, but they have confirmed that attendance is not compulsory at this time.

In the meantime, if you have questions or concerns then please contact your child's school in the first instance through the usual channels.

Yours sincerely



**Helen Ellis**

Assistant Director - Education, SEND, Family Solutions, Early Years & Youth