

Our Ref: AO/2020-05-21oParent-Guardian
Date: 21 May 2020
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Dear Parent/Guardian,

As you are most likely aware, part of the government's plans to ease lockdown includes the possibility of schools early years settings opening to more pupils from 1 June 2020. As we approach this date we wanted to write to you to update you on the position across Suffolk.

We know that keeping your children at home has been challenging and we want to thank you for being part of the national response to the coronavirus pandemic in doing this. Schools have also done an excellent job in challenging circumstances and we thank them for all the work they have done.

The government's phased opening of schools and settings to more pupils would start with pupils in nurseries, reception, year one and year six. This will be in addition to accommodating children of key workers and vulnerable pupils. Secondary Schools and other schools such as pupil referral units and special schools will also gradually increase the number of children and young people they can accommodate. For secondary schools this will start with year 10 and year 12.

This phased opening of schools and settings to more schools and settings will only happen if the level of new infections continues to decrease and the government's other conditions are met;

- To make sure the NHS can cope by providing sufficient critical care across the UK
- To see a sustained and consistent fall in daily death rates with confidence the UK is beyond the peak
- Reliable data to show the infection rate is falling to manageable levels
- There is enough testing and personal protective equipment (PPE) to meet future demand
- Any changes in restrictions would not lead to a second peak

A decision by the government is not expected until Friday 29 May 2020.

Suffolk County Council is supporting the leaders of schools and settings to increase safely the number of children and young people on site; this will be based on risk assessments which will be developed for each school. Not all schools will be able to respond in the same way but they will all give priority to the health and wellbeing of pupils and staff as well as families. We have been listening to the experiences and concerns of children, young people and families since the start of the pandemic. These are very important to us and have helped us make decisions about where services and support should be focused. This is also reflected in the risk assessment guidance that we have shared with schools and settings.

We realise that the decision whether to send your children and young people back to school at this time will not be an easy one to make so we have emphasised to schools the importance of ensuring that parents and carers are given the information they need in order to make an informed choice. Government guidance has made it clear that it is not compulsory for parents to send their children to school at this time and there will be no penalties for families who choose to keep children at home. Schools will continue to provide accessible opportunities for children and young people to learn at home and your school will explain to you how they plan to keep in touch with their families and pupils over the coming weeks.

For more information on the re-opening of schools, the Government has issued the following guidance; www.gov.uk/government/publications/closure-of-educational-settings-information-for-parents-and-carers/reopening-schools-and-other-educational-settings-from-1-june

We would like to thank families for their efforts during this time. In Suffolk we will continue to monitor the situation closely and follow guidance released by the government. We will update you as soon as we have more information. The following resources are available for families during this time:

SCC schools guidance:

www.suffolk.gov.uk/coronavirus-covid-19/schools-guidance/

Advice and help for parents or carers who have a child with SEND:

www.suffolksendiass.co.uk

www.spcn.org.uk

Help and Advice for young people:

www.thesource.me.uk

Yours sincerely



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