

**Education and Skills**  
Westfields  
Middlewich Road  
Sandbach  
Cheshire  
CW11 4TS

DATE: 27/05/2020

Dear Parent

Thank you for your recent response expressing your concerns about the phased wider opening of schools across Cheshire East.

Since the prime minister's announcement on 10 May our education team has been working tirelessly with school staff and held discussions with unions, the [Cheshire East parent carer forum](#) and the Department for Education to plan a way forward that meets the government guidance of a [phased return of some children to school from 1 June](#).

This government guidance asks primary schools to prepare to welcome back all children currently in nursery, reception, year 1 and year 6 and for secondary schools to provide some face-to-face support for pupils in year 10 and year 12 facing exams next year to supplement their remote education. The guidance advises that if a school cannot accommodate all the above pupils then the younger pupils should be the priority.

The Department for Education has published some [useful online resources](#) to help children learn at home. In addition, most schools have provided work and support for home learning. However, we do appreciate the additional pressure this has placed on many families.

Following our discussions with the parent carer forum, head teacher representatives, trade unions and the Department for Education, an agreement was reached to plan for a phased wider opening of schools from 15 June, prioritising the safety of children and staff and providing time for schools to prepare classrooms that adhere to social distancing measures. This phased approach will be implemented on a controlled basis where staffing capacity and space allows.

The changes schools need to make to working practices are significant, and we believe that a consistent approach across the borough provides some clarity for parents. We recognise that this will be challenging for parents, children, teachers and school leaders to get up and running and respond to new ways of working, adjusting to life as we recover from the Covid-19 crisis, whilst ensuring that everyone is safe.

It should be noted that the rate of infections in the North West of England, though on a par with England average, has been higher than all other areas, excepting London. As the North West has had a higher rate of Covid-19 infections than other parts of the country we are using this time to ensure that we have all appropriate safeguards in place.

Schools will not be delivering a full curriculum during these unprecedented times, but we are proud of the steps that schools across Cheshire East have taken to continue to support learning, especially as this is not something that they were asked to do when school closures were announced. Our priority moving forward will be to work with schools, Ofsted and the Department of Education to consider the impact of Covid 19 arrangements on the progress of children's learning.

We also acknowledge that there will be a mixed response to the Cheshire East approach. We were aware that, whilst many parents are anxious about a return to schools and would be pleased with our approach, some parents would want their children to return sooner and would be disappointed. The safety of children and school staff is paramount and must be our priority.

We will continue to monitor this very challenging transition towards wider full-time teaching and learning and will support our schools to make any necessary changes as we make progress.

We would encourage you to speak to your school directly for regular updates. Any updates from Cheshire East Council will be shared online at [www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/schools](http://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/schools).

All correspondences should be directed to [COVID19schoolplaces@cheshireeast.gov.uk](mailto:COVID19schoolplaces@cheshireeast.gov.uk)

Yours faithfully



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Mark Palethorpe  
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