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Children and Young People's Services
Town Hall
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Dear Colleagues

Government guidance on wider opening of schools and colleges

The purpose of my letter is to update you on Calderdale Council's consideration of the Government guidance in relation to wider school opening.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/actions-for-educational-and-childcare-settings-to-prepare-for-wider-opening-from-1-june-2020/actions-for-education-and-childcare-settings-to-prepare-for-wider-opening-from-1-june-2020>

The Government has stated:

As a result of the huge efforts everyone has made to adhere to strict social distancing measures, the transmission rate of coronavirus (COVID-19) has decreased. We therefore anticipate, with further progress, that we may be able, from the week commencing 1 June, to welcome back more children to early years, school and further education settings. We will only do this provided that the 5 key tests set by government justify the changes at the time, including that the rate of infection is decreasing and the enabling programmes set out in the roadmap are operating effectively.

The Council Leader, Lead Member for Children and the Cabinet have taken external legal advice; advice from the Director of Public Health, the Director of Children's Services and considered the evidence of Mr Rahman Chief Scientific Adviser to the Department of Education to the Science and Technology Committee, 13 May 2020.

Gavin Williamson, Education Secretary in the Governments daily briefing outlined on 19th April 2020 five key tests that must be undertaken before schools can be reopened.

The first two tests have been met: the NHS is able to cope and the death rate is coming down.

The Council's view is not assured that the next three tests have been met or will be met by 1st June. The third test is '*we need reliable data that shows the rate of infection is decreasing to manageable levels*'. The Director of Public Health has advised that we do not have reliable data. What we do know is that the 'R' transmission rate is higher in the North East, Yorkshire and Humber and the impact of the recent relaxation and return to work of some people is not yet known.

Test four is *'we need to be confident that testing capacity and PPE is being managed, with supply able to meet, not just today's demand, but future demand'*. We are not confident there is sufficient testing capacity, or that this will be available from the 1st June in Calderdale.

Test five is *'and perhaps most crucially, we need to be confident that any changes we do make will not risk a second peak of infections'*. We are not confident this is the case and we have considered news from France on outbreaks in their schools and the wider community on re-opening several weeks ago.

Consequently Calderdale Council are advising schools not to open more widely until we can be confident that children, young people and staff are able to return to classrooms safely.

Headteachers, governing bodies and Academy Trusts can consider the Council's advice, but ultimately it is your decision whether you extend your opening or not.

I would be grateful if you could share this letter with your parents, staff members and governing bodies as soon as possible and consider this advice. I am aware that many of you have started making plans, based on risk assessment, for wider opening. I advise that you continue to do this, in preparation for eventual opening, whenever that is.

We will communicate regularly with you over the coming days and weeks; provide advice and guidance to support you in determining your individual arrangements. Mark Randall and his team are keeping an oversight of the Calderdale position and I would be grateful if you could let him know if you intend to open more widely to pupils.

Thank you again for your exceptional work and dedication to the children and young people of Calderdale.

Yours sincerely



Julie Jenkins
Director – Children and Young People's Services

