

May 2020

Dear Parents and Carers

This has been a most testing time for many of you. I am writing to let you know about some of the key messages from the City Council about plans to extend the opening of schools and nurseries.

I have attached the statement issued this week from the City Mayor which expresses our local position and encourages schools and other settings to be flexible and plan for a gradual and safe return.

You can find out more about the details within the government's announcement and the guidance issued for schools and parents on GOV.UK - [Opening schools and educational settings to more pupils from 1 June](#).

We recognise that the timing of the government announcement has left schools under a huge amount of pressure and that each school will need to respond to the challenges in their own way and at their own pace. Schools should only open further when they are satisfied it is safe to do.

We have asked all schools to complete risk assessments which should be shared with governing bodies, staff, parents and unions. These risk assessments need to be kept under review. The City Council is not in a position to tell individual schools if they should open or not. This is an operational matter and therefore the responsibility of Senior Leadership Teams and Governing Bodies. We continue to do everything we can to support this process.

Schools and nurseries will make it as safe as possible for your child to return, for example, ensuring that children are in small groups and supported by a small number of staff and that there are good arrangements for regular handwashing.

I understand that there may still be concerns around your child returning to school. It is important that you share these concerns with the school who will be in a position to tell you what plans they have put in place to minimise risk.

The decision about whether your child should return is an individual choice. Each household need to assess the specific risks that you face. In the immediate future no fines will be issued for non-attendance and the school will not be measured on attendance figures.

Having said this, we recognise that education is really important and that many children are at key developmental stages in their school career. I am sure your school are in contact with you and will make you aware of their individual plans as they emerge. If you are uncertain, do contact them directly.

Finally, I would like to thank all who work in education across the City. Many schools and nurseries have remained open throughout the pandemic, support has been given to the children of key workers over Easter and we have seen all schools supporting families with home learning.

Leicester City Council will continue to do everything we can to support schools, staff and governing bodies throughout this challenging time.



Cllr Ely Cutkevin - Assistant City Mayor with responsibility for Education

City Mayor Statement: Schools Re-opening

In Leicester, I do not expect all schools to extend their opening on 1st June or on any other particular date - nor will I be pressing them to do so. I believe schools should only extend their opening when school leaders and governors are convinced that all that is possible has been done to make them safe for children, families and staff. Council officers are helping to advise and support this process.

My colleagues and I are immensely grateful for all the hard work that has gone into the response to the Coronavirus pandemic across the City's schools.

Many have remained partially open throughout lockdown, including over the Easter holidays, helping families with home learning, continuing provision of free school meals and, perhaps most vitally, supporting families and children under pressure in what are the most testing of times.

The Government's announcement that it wishes more children to return to schools from 1st June has caused understandable concern and unreasonable pressure on schools. The risks had not been fully assessed by the Government and the many unanswered questions were not discussed with school leadership, staff, unions or Councils. My colleagues and I share these legitimate concerns. For this reason, I would like to make it clear that there is no pressure from the Council for opening to a wider intake on June 1st or on any other particular date.

My colleagues and I believe that the safety and well-being of children, their families and staff should be the overwhelming concerns.

Although Councils are not able to decide whether individual schools open or close, prior to a decision to further reopen I would urge all involved in Leicester as school leaders to issue full risk assessments that have been considered and approved by their Governing Bodies. We are supporting schools with this process. These assessments should be shared with parents, teaching and non-teaching staff and their unions and broad agreement to mitigation of risk in those assessments should be an essential prerequisite to opening more fully. I would expect that these shared risk assessments will be kept under frequent review.

As I have already stated, recognising that in the immediate future there may be many legitimate reasons why a particular child is not sent to school, in Leicester the Council will not be taking enforcement action to ensure attendance.

We recognise that this is an incredibly difficult time for everyone involved and that there are likely to be more challenges ahead. I want to assure you that the Council is doing everything within its power to support schools, staff, parents and governors through this challenging time.

**Peter Soulsby
City Mayor**