



22<sup>nd</sup> May 2020

Dear Parents and Carers,

Thank you for completing the questionnaire we sent out last week. Many schools across the borough struggled to gain responses from parents, but I am delighted to say almost 95% of you gave your views, which has been vital in allowing us to plan our next steps – thank you all for this.

What we learned was that only around one third of parents and carers said they would send their child back to school at this time. The greatest percentage of parents who indicated they would like their child to return were in Year 6, where around 50% of parents responded positively. This was broadly reflected across Gateshead schools and indicates the level of fear and uncertainty at this time.

In order to open Gateshead Schools to increased numbers of children safely, Head teachers across Gateshead have therefore agreed that the initial date suggested by the government of June 1<sup>st</sup> is too early and, instead, have set a date of June 8<sup>th</sup>, at the earliest. The reasons behind this difficult decision were:

- It is generally agreed that Gateshead has one of the highest transmission and infection rates in the country for COVID19. We are, therefore, cautious about bringing large numbers of people together in a confined space for a number of hours. Although this position may be improving, the situation remains fragile.
- Schools have not had sufficient time to complete and consult on robust risk assessments.
- The Government has yet to confirm progress on their five tests, which is a key condition they set for schools to bring more children into school. This is not expected until Friday 29<sup>th</sup> May which is too late for an opening of 1<sup>st</sup> June.
- The scientific evidence is not yet conclusive regarding child to child and child to adult Coronavirus transmission. This is a significant issue when working with younger children where social distancing becomes impractical and unrealistic. If asymptomatic children are capable of spreading the virus the impact on families and communities could be severe.

<https://www.rcpch.ac.uk/resources/covid-19-research-evidence-summaries>



It was agreed that from **8<sup>th</sup> June** schools in Gateshead could begin the process of a gradual reintroduction of more children, if practicable. It was also acknowledged that at this time some schools will have reached their capacity with the key worker and vulnerable groups, so would be unable to admit additional children. The reintroduction of further children in other year groups after 8<sup>th</sup> June should be gradual and cautious, for example children from one year group at a time at the school's discretion.

Therefore, after much discussion we have decided to begin with the reintroduction of our **Year 6** children on the 8<sup>th</sup> June and monitor this carefully over the first two weeks. We then hope to introduce another year group after that if appropriate, that being Year 1. Providing the return is smooth, and the local and national position remains the same, our aim is to open to the additional year groups gradually before the end of the academic year. I will of course keep you up to date with plans and timescales when they are confirmed.

As has been the case since February, the school will continue to be open to Key Worker and vulnerable children.

We will be contacting our Year 6 families week commencing 1<sup>st</sup> June with detailed information on how the phased return will work for them.

Remote learning will continue for all pupils who are not in school from the 8<sup>th</sup>. School will be closed to all pupils from 3.15pm tonight for the half term break, and will re-open at 8.45am on Monday 1<sup>st</sup> June to keyworker and agreed pupils only.

Thank you for your understanding.

Craig Steel  
Head Teacher