

Children & Young People

Oldham Council, Civic Centre, Level 3,
West Street, Oldham, OL1 1UT

Dear Parents and Carers

We are writing to update you on the approach that is being taken in Oldham to determine whether schools should wider their opening in light of the COVID-19 crisis.

Firstly, we would like to thank all parents and carers for all their efforts during this difficult period. We have all faced the challenge of ensuring our children and young people are safe and healthy while also considering how their educational and social needs can continue to be met. Thank you.

In Oldham we are continuing to take a cautious and safety-first approach to wider school opening which means that no school in Oldham will take in additional pupils, unless it is felt, that it is safe to do so. We are working closely with each educational setting on stringent health and safety assessments and these must be in place before the school Governing Body makes an individual decision based on wider factors.

As part of this process we have encouraged and listened to the voice of the parent/carer as part of decision making. It is also important to stress that any parent/carer who decides they do not feel comfortable sending their child to school at this time will not face a punishment for non-attendance.

We know that safe solutions will look different in each school, academy and early years setting. There is no 'one-size-fits-all', and this will be a gradual and phased return over a period of weeks and months, with continual checks and balances being made to ensure safety is at the centre of everything. As part of this we have written to all schools to keep them up to date on local Coronavirus testing and contact tracing arrangements.

Also, we will review the situation in Oldham on a weekly basis, looking at all available data and, if necessary, we will make changes to our position if necessary.

It is important to stress that the position we are adopting in continuing to support schools to open more widely on a phased basis is in line with the majority of councils across Greater Manchester. We will continue to prioritise the attendance of vulnerable pupils and the children

and young people of critical workers. It is worth noting that the vast majority of schools in Oldham have been open for 10 weeks.

We appreciate the concerns people have had about the rising 'R' rate from one study. This particular figure is a very broad regional prediction of the Coronavirus reproduction rate with wide uncertainty. This needs to be seen alongside our own data in Oldham which continues to show steep falls in the infection rate and death rate.

Indeed, the current infection rate in Oldham, which shows the confirmed number of local cases, is around the average across Greater Manchester and lower than some of our neighbouring areas.

We would also urge parents and carers, as well as all children and young people to continue to observe social distancing at all times and particularly when going to and from school. If we all continue to play our part in tackling the threat of Coronavirus, then the sooner we can begin this phased return to a business as usual position.

Thank you.

Yours sincerely



Gerard Jones
Managing Director of
Children & Young
People



Katrina Stephens
Director of Public
Health



Cllr Shaid Mushtaq
Cabinet Member for
Education



Cllr Zahid Chauhan
Cabinet Member for
Health & Social Care