

For attn of Parents / Carers

Date: 29th May 2020
Ref: DPH/ph
Tel:

LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC HEALTH

Dear Parent / Carer

Covid-19 Virus – Preparation to return to School

Thank you for taking the time to read this letter.

Together with your Headteacher, we are working hard to do what we can to support the borough's children back to school and to protect their health and the health of all the staff in our schools.

This is an anxious time for everyone and, as a parent, everyone wants what is best for the physical and mental health of their child and their family. We know that we have seen a fall in Covid-19 cases and lockdown has been a big part of this. We also know that some families and children have found lockdown very difficult to cope with. Therefore, the next stage is how we can open things up gradually and sensibly so that we do not see a big increase in cases locally.

The plans that our schools have put in place will help support children back into school with the right steps in place to reduce the risks of getting Covid-19 as far as we can. This includes practical steps such as keeping the number of children down at first, continuing with hand washing and making sure that any children who are ill do not come into school.

When schools do re-open, they will function differently to how things worked before. Class sizes will be smaller (15 pupils or less) and schools will be working to implement social distancing where possible. This means the way lessons run may change: break times, lunch times may be staggered; school start and finish times may be different. This will not be a 'one size fits all' approach but will be tailored to your child's school.

Inside the classroom, pupils will form a 'social bubble' – spending time with the same group of children during lessons, break and lunch and working where possible with the same members of teaching staff. This is to reduce the risk of the virus spreading and protect pupils and staff. Please note that in general school staff will not wear masks.

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Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council, The Civic Centre, Darwall Street, Walsall WS1 1TP
Tel: 01922 650000 Web: www.walsall.gov.uk

This is a new virus and doctors and scientists are learning from the experiences of places that have already opened up their primary schools.

What we do know from the UK and many other countries is that children and young people who have Covid-19 usually have a mild to moderate illness and that many may show very few signs of being ill. During the first peak of this pandemic, very few children across the whole of the West Midlands have needed medical attention for the virus in hospital and those that have, have often had other major health conditions. Special arrangements will be made for any children who have health conditions that make them more at risk.

We are also learning more about how much children pass on the virus and although there is more to learn about this, scientists do not think that children spread COVID as quickly as they do in such cases as flu and winter vomiting bugs.

How parents can support their child to go back to school?

- Talk to their children about coronavirus (COVID-19), social distancing and handwashing
- follow [guidance for households with possible coronavirus infection](#)
- do not gather at entrances or in playgrounds
- model social distancing so that their children learn good practice
- ensure that children are not sent to school if displaying symptoms such as a high temperature and/or cough
- let them know that their teachers will not wear masks most of the time

If you have any concerns, contact your school nurse Tel: 01922 423349 or Email schoolnursing@walsallhealthcare.nhs.uk

We will continue to make sure that the plans schools have in place change when they need to and that we manage this as safely and sensitively as we can and would like to thank you for everything you are doing.



STEPHEN GUNTHER