

19th May 2020

Easing the lockdown in schools across York

You will be all too aware of the national debate of the decision to reopen schools to more children gradually, as long as key safety criteria are met. Since the Prime Minister's announcement, there has been a lot of government guidance and schools across the country are working to see how the intention to open school more widely might be achieved.

In York, all schools and academies have been meeting online as the York Schools and Academies Board regularly to formulate our response collectively, in the interests of everyone in our school communities. We want to make it clear that we will only open our schools to more pupils if we are satisfied the risks have been minimised according to government guidance. **The health and safety of staff and pupils is the guiding principle in every decision we make.**

Our initial plans – subject to the government's key criteria being met – are that all primary schools will be closed on Monday 1 June (other than for those children currently accessing schools) in order for all settings to be thoroughly organised, safe and ready for what will be a quite different experience of school for our pupils. When places are provided for more children, these may be on a part-time basis. Due to children attending in small groups, all schools (other than for key worker children, vulnerable and EHCP) anticipate they are likely to be closed, initially for up to a day a week, in order to carry out ongoing preparatory work and a deep clean.

Looking ahead, we will continue to prioritise, above all others, those children who are still coming to school. We are working to explore ways where, if conditions allow, we can reintroduce children to school gradually, in a phased way. We want to begin with Nursery classes, followed by Reception, then Year 1 and finally Year 6. However, I want to emphasise these measures will be taken extremely cautiously, year group by year group, and only when we are confident to do so. Vulnerable students and children of essential workers will continue to attend school in the same way as they are currently.

At the same time, we need to acknowledge that available capacity in our school will dictate the pace at which the wider reopening of our school can happen; it is important to emphasise that, in order to maintain satisfactory distancing, there will be limits to the number of children who can attend.

An information sheet is attached which we hope will be helpful and we will continue to keep you informed of progress as this situation continues to unfold.