

# Southport Learning Partnership



20<sup>th</sup> May 2020

Dear Parent / Carer,

We sincerely hope this letter finds you and your family well at a time that is uniquely challenging and, as often said, unprecedented.

As members of the Southport Learning Partnership we are writing to you to update you on the Government's recent announcement and conditional plans for schools opening to more children and young people from early June.

The debate surrounding schools opening their doors to a wider group of pupils, continues to have a national focus and we recognise that it raises anxiety, concerns and questions for both the profession and parents. Whilst the national debate continues, the challenge of getting our schools open at some point still remains. We are writing to you as a Southport collaborative, to outline our current view on how we can do this in the safest way possible.

As you are aware, since 23<sup>rd</sup> March, our schools have remained open only to children of critical workers and vulnerable children. Following the Prime Minister's announcement on Sunday 10<sup>th</sup> May, schools have been asked to open for children and young people in specific year groups from 1<sup>st</sup> June. The Government have asked all Primary schools to open for all children in Reception, Year 1 and Year 6 and for Nurseries to open too. Secondary schools, sixth forms, and further education colleges have been asked to begin some face to face support with Year 10 and Year 12 pupils, although it is not expected that these pupils will return on a full-time basis at this stage.

Our special schools are being asked to continue to prioritise the most vulnerable pupils and those of key workers, as they have already been doing up until now. They have also been asked to consider the possibility of offering additional pupils places, as and when these can be safely catered for in their individual settings.

The Government's position is backed by current scientific confidence that children of all ages have less severe symptoms than adults, if they contract Coronavirus. Furthermore, their belief is that transmission rates from children to adults is limited. Although widely debated, their 'roadmap' principle is that we should limit the numbers of children going back to schools and colleges initially, then gradually increase numbers, as guided by scientific advice. It is thought that this will reduce the risk of increasing the rate of transmission. With this advice central to the Government's decision, last week the Department for Education provided very welcome guidance to school leaders on the steps they should take to increase the number of children and young people attending school. On this basis, leaders within every school in the Southport Learning Partnership have been working hard to develop carefully considered action plans. This has been a complex undertaking, involving much consultation between school leaders, the Local Authority,

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Academy Leaders, governors, staff and parents to formulate a way forward. It must be appreciated that every school setting is unique. Our schools, the Local Authority and Academy Leaders are working together to ensure that we recognise the need for consistency, but each school will have to respond to its own individual circumstances. With this in mind Southport schools are guided by the following principles.

- *We have and will continue to prioritise vulnerable learners and children of key workers.*
- *The 1st of June date is the earliest date and an ambition, **not a mandatory start date**. Most of our schools will not be able to **begin** the process of reopening until **15<sup>th</sup> June**. Sefton Local Authority also support this view.*
- *In our planning, the health, safety and welfare of children and young people and our school staff is paramount. Detailed risk assessments will be undertaken by each school before opening to additional pupils. These assessments will directly address risks associated with Coronavirus, so that sensible measures can be put in place to minimise those risks for children and staff.*
- *Schools will open only to the number of children they can safely accommodate, which might mean that not all Nursery, Reception, Yr 1 or Yr 6 attend at the same time.*
- *In order to allow as many children in the designated year groups to attend school, schools may offer places on a part-time basis or for a certain number of sessions / days per week.*
- *In order to provide staff with the additional planning and preparation time needed, schools may shorten the length of the school week.*
- *Schools will continue to provide learning resources for children in all year groups whether they are able to attend school or not.*

It is also important to recognise that some schools will have limited and varying numbers of staff available and your child may not necessarily have their regular classroom teacher and teaching assistants. Staff will be very conscious that routines and learning will be different and will be sensitive to the extra support some children will need. As part of the approach our schools will also ensure the following measures are in place.

- *Carry out additional stringent cleaning everyday so that when children leave, the spaces and resources that they have used are thoroughly cleaned to reduce the risk of the spread of the virus.*
- *Ensure regular handwashing takes place throughout the day and on entry and exit.*
- *Limit activities to use resources that can be cleaned easily and regularly.*
- *Organise children into small classes / groups or 'bubbles' with the same adult/s.*

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- Reorganise furniture within classrooms to encourage social distancing.
- Stagger breaks and lunchtimes to prevent larger groups mixing.
- Impose staggered times for adults to drop off and collect children so that there is minimal adult contact and the recommended two metre social distancing guidance can be followed.

We would like to express our gratitude for your understanding and patience, as this process has taken a great deal of time and careful consideration. Please be assured that as soon as Headteachers are in a position to share their plans for opening with you, they will. We sincerely hope that the level of detail they provide, will enable you to make an informed decision on whether you allow your child to return to school.

Finally, in a world that is currently full of confusion, we want to reassure you that your child's safety and wellbeing, as well as that of our staff and our families across the Southport community, is at the heart of our decision making. There have been lots of difficult decisions to make, which will not always please or be exactly right for everybody concerned, but we know you will continue to support our local schools and colleges, as well as each other in these incredibly challenging times.

Kind regards,

Neil Moore (Stanley High) Chair

Sandie Lineton (Kings Meadow) Vice Chair

Paul Hooton (Ainsdale St. Johns)

Nick Sheeran (Birkdale Primary)

Gil Bourgade (Birkdale High)

Siobhan Bayliff (Bishop David Sheppard Primary)

Erin Wheeler (Christ the King High)

Belinda Taylor / Jinnie Payne (Churchtown Primary)

Suzanne Payne (Crossens Nursery)

Adrian Antell (Farnborough Rd Juniors)

Jennifer Taylor (Farnborough Rd Infants)

Ian Raikes (Greenbank High)

Louise Morton (Holy Family Primary)

Sue Mawdsley (Holy Trinity Primary)

Christina Jackson (Kew Woods Primary)

Julian Ward (Larkfield Primary)

Lisa Brown (Linaker Primary)

Kath Hall (Marshside Primary)

Ian Parry (Meols Cop High)

Peter Chadwick (Merefield School)

Lee Dumbell (Norwood Primary)

Maureen Hillsdon (Our Lady of Lourdes)

Janet Allen (Peterhouse School)

Tony Fay (Presfield High)

Sarah Knipe (Shoreside Primary)

Phil Thompson (St. John's Crossens)

Gary Bevin (St. Patrick's Primary)

Sandie Edward (St. Philip's Primary)

Kirsten Moon (St. Teresa's Primary)

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