



WARRINGTON

Borough Council

To: All Parents and Carers

Councillor Matt Smith
Cabinet Member
Children's Services

West Annexe
Town Hall
Warrington
WA1 1UH

4 June 2020

Dear parents and carers

I wanted to write again to update you on what has been happening in Warrington's schools as they prepare to welcome back more children. As a parent of two school age children, I appreciate the anxieties that parents and children have regarding the return to school at this time.

You will be aware that, although our schools closed to the majority of children at the end of March, they have remained open to support the children of critical workers and vulnerable children. We have seen around one thousand children in our schools during their busiest weeks. Throughout this period, schools and their teachers have been working tirelessly to make the buildings as safe as they can with enhanced cleaning regimes, social distancing and reduced staff numbers. Our schools have collaborated, shared good practice and adopted a common approach to the health and safety of children and staff.

In preparing to welcome more children back to our schools in the safest possible way, each school has completed a very comprehensive risk assessment. As part of this they will have enhanced cleaning taking place and have been provided with PPE by the local authority. Other measures will include children and staff working in groups which will not mix with each other during the day (these groups are sometimes called "bubbles"), considering how schools meals will be served safely and the removal of soft furnishings which cannot be easily cleaned. They have looked at how children will enter, move around within and leave buildings along with every other aspect of the school day. Your child's school will provide you with more detail regarding their specific risk assessments and procedures.

The schools and the local authority are working closely together along with our colleagues in Public Health to take an evidence based approach. Public Health is confident that the risk to children is lower than to the general population and when they do experience the virus it is usually mild. All schools have received guidelines on how to avoid infection from COVID-19. We are also

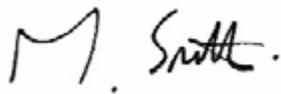
issuing a COVID-19 support pack to all schools and a Track and Trace Programme is now in place so we can find people with COVID-19 and ask them to self-isolate.

A review of current scientific evidence published by the COVID-19 North West Science and Technical Advice Cell [STAC] on 28th May states that children “do not appear to play a major role in transmission” of the virus. This was supported by evidence from recent studies involving school children in Northern Ireland and Australia.

I fully accept that parents and carers will take decisions for their own children, based on the specific circumstances within their families, but I hope this letter will give you some reassurance about the work undertaken locally to reduce the risks for children returning to school in Warrington.

I will also take this opportunity to thank you all for supporting your children at home with their remote learning. Perhaps your children don't express their gratitude to you every day, but schools certainly appreciate how parents and carers have continued to work with and support their children despite the challenges of their own home working.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "M. Smith." The signature is written in a cursive style with a period at the end.

Cllr. Matt Smith
Cabinet Member for Children's Services
Warrington Borough Council