



**OXFORDSHIRE
COUNTY COUNCIL**

**County Hall
New Road
Oxford
OX1 1ND**

**Kevin Gordon
Director for Children's Services**

Date:28 August 2020

Dear Parents/Carers,

We are writing to you to provide you with an update about the wider opening of schools and the start of the new academic year.

We would like to start by reassuring you that we have been working closely with schools and colleges to make sure that all children are welcomed back safely.

School leaders and staff have been working incredibly hard to prepare their premises for the safe return of children. Risk assessments have been carried out and hygiene measures are in place across all educational settings, and all educational providers are following Department for Education, Public Health England and County Council guidance.

COVID-19 in Oxfordshire

We recognise that some parents may feel anxious, particularly in light of the rising number of COVID-19 cases in Oxford. We would like to confirm that the rise in cases is predominantly among 18 to 29 year olds, and not school-age children; it will not impact the reopening of schools.

Research by Public Health England shows that coronavirus outbreaks and infections in schools and early years settings are very rare. Out of more than 1 million children attending pre-school and primary school in June, just 70 children were affected. In Oxfordshire, 94% of schools have remained open since the start of lockdown and we have not seen any significant outbreaks during this time.

Current scientific evidence shows that coronavirus presents a much lower risk to children than adults of becoming severely ill – the great majority of children and teenagers who catch COVID-19 have mild symptoms or no symptoms at all. There is also no evidence that children transmit the disease any more than adults.

We are continuing to monitor the situation in Oxford very closely. Processes are in place so that schools and colleges can respond quickly and appropriately should there be a suspected or confirmed case in their setting.

Stopping the spread

We would like to stress that everyone has a part to play in stopping the spread of the virus. Children must not be sent to school or college if they are showing symptoms of coronavirus or if someone in their household is showing symptoms. Please call 119 to book a test if your child or anyone in your household is displaying symptoms.

We would encourage all children and young people to follow preventative measures at school and at home, including good hand hygiene and maintaining social distance, in order to protect themselves, their families, teachers and social networks. This will help reduce the risk of school outbreaks and enable schools to remain open.

Further advice, together with information about Oxfordshire's local outbreak control plan, can be found at www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/stopthespread.

School attendance

School attendance is very important for all children and young people – it is vital for their educational progress, wellbeing and wider development. We would like to underline the fact that all pupils, in all year groups, will be expected to return to school full time from the beginning of the autumn term.

We recognise that, for some children, the transition back to school will not cause concerns, while others may be worried. If you are concerned in any way about your child, please do speak with your school or educational setting and they will be able to offer help and advice.

If you would like more information about returning to school, please visit the government website: www.gov.uk/backtoschool.

We would like to wish your child a safe and enjoyable start to the new academic year.

Kind regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'KSG', with a horizontal line extending from the end.

Kevin Gordon
Director for Children's Services