



Cllr Abtisam Mohammed
Cabinet Member for Education and Skills
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Dear parents and carers

I wrote to you on 29th May to explain that we had decided to delay the wider opening of schools, academies and childcare settings until 15th June. Sheffield City Council has, throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, put the health, safety and well-being of our citizens at the forefront of all our decisions. For this reason, we asked our schools and childcare settings to delay their wider opening until at least 15th June.

Yesterday we received updated advice from Sheffield's Director of Public Health, Greg Fell. He has advised that good progress has been made towards addressing the concerns he previously outlined. In particular, there is evidence that the national "test and trace" system, recently introduced, is in place and is working effectively in Sheffield. Other key indicators, including infection rates, also continue to improve. In considering all of this he has advised that he is satisfied that schools and childcare settings can begin to open more widely, in a planned and measured way, from 15th June.

Wider opening is an important step to ensuring that more children get back to school and, in turn, that parents and carers can return to work. However, we must remember that the measures needed to make sure that this is safe, also limit the number of children who can attend at any one time. Each school and childcare setting has calculated the number of children that can be safely accommodated. Some of our schools are already at full capacity. This has been recognised by the government yesterday in their announcement that all schools are not going to be fully open before the autumn term.

Schools and childcare providers will need to make careful, but sometimes difficult, decisions about bringing in additional children. Each school and childcare setting will continue to work at their own pace in making these decisions. Please be patient. As usual, please also check with your child's school before sending your child in. Children who remain at home will continue to be supported in their learning.

Wider opening for special schools and integrated resources is different from mainstream schools as they are not being asked to open by specific year group, but to open more widely. This means that it will feel more like a gradual expansion of numbers in those schools. Schools will continue to work with families to make the decision about how each child will return by assessing their need alongside the school's capacity to keep children and staff safe in line with guidance from government.

The education and childcare sectors in Sheffield have done us proud throughout this most difficult period. I thank each and every education and childcare worker who has made such a valuable contribution to the national effort, and in particular for the support that they have provided to the children, young people and citizens of Sheffield.

The wider opening next week is important but is just the first step in a much longer process. We all need to remain vigilant against the spread of COVID-19. In schools this will mean children working in tight groups, known as “social bubbles”. It will also mean that hygiene routines and social distancing continue to be vital in managing the pandemic.

Ours is a cautious approach. We will continue to rigorously monitor the number of children attending across the city, and colleagues in Public Health will continue to monitor infection rates and the progress of the pandemic itself. We have seen a remarkable collaborative approach taken in the City to support children and young people and it more important than ever that that continues throughout this next phase.”

We will carefully keep this under review. Our overall priority remains focused on the health and wellbeing of our children and staff. Thank you for your support during this very difficult time.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Abtisa Mohamed', written in a cursive style.

Cllr Abtisa Mohamed

Cabinet Member for Education and Skills

Sheffield City Council