

**Your reference:**  
**Please ask for:** Cath Pealing  
**Extension:**  
**Direct line:** 01942 489453  
**Date:** 11<sup>th</sup> January 2021

Dear Parents and Carers,

As you are aware the Prime Minister has announced a full lockdown which has meant that all schools were closed except for children categorised as vulnerable and children of our critical workers. None of us wanted the 2021 to start like this and we had hoped that all of our children would be returning to school by the 18th January at the very latest.

We need to drive down the infection rates in Wigan and indeed the whole country so that we are all safe and secure in returning to everyday life. In order to do that, it is crucial we all follow the government guidance of staying home unless absolutely necessary. We need everyone to follow this guidance to protect not only the NHS but also ourselves, our families and our friends. Hopefully, with the roll out of the vaccine and keeping to the guidance this will happen sooner rather than later.

Government guidance for schools and for parents and carers has been very clear about who should access places in schools. 'Children with at least one parent or carer who is a critical worker can go to school or college if required, but parents and carers should keep their children at home if they can.' Full guidance for parents and carers can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-maintaining-educational-provision/guidance-for-schools-colleges-and-local-authorities-on-maintaining-educational-provision>

We would ask that if you can, as the guidance says keep your child at home then please do so. Schools are under increasing pressure to manage the number of children and young people in school due to staff not being able to attend school due to COVID issues. Schools may therefore as a last resort have to consider prioritising places for vulnerable children, health workers and school staff. Schools will only do this after considering their Risk Assessment and consultation with their governing body and Wigan Council. This will be continually reviewed as situations change throughout this current lockdown. Your school will keep you informed as to what is happening. Schools will likely have to make appropriate adjustments to their offer if they have any issues with their capacity in staff to support and safeguard children both on school site and at home.

Alongside having children in school, schools are working hard to provide a high quality remote learning for those accessing education at home. As you can imagine this is placing a very heavy burden on staff to ensure that everyone is catered for. Please do remember that all school situations are different and this

impacts on how a school will deliver remote learning. There are many different ways that this can be delivered and no one way is the only way.

Some schools may have the facilities to deliver 'live' lessons and other may not be able to do so, that does not mean that their offer is any less effective. Please do work with your school to support your child and if you do have any worries then please discuss with your school. All our schools have worked incredibly hard to ensure that what they are offering is helping our children and young people to carry on learning in very difficult circumstances. If you are struggling with accessing online learning again please do speak to your school.

We would ask that you continue to encourage your children to follow the advice of Hands, Face, Space. Our schools will continue to reinforce this message as well as ensuring social distancing, good ventilation, use of face coverings as appropriate, and ensuring people with symptoms do not attend. These remain the most effective ways to reduce the spread of the virus, even with rapid testing in place within schools.

However, as parents and carers you could further support by not sending children to school unless necessary – stay at home; please don't bring children to school if they are of an age when they can walk there on their own. If you need to take your child to school please observe hands, face, space, wear a face covering and don't stand around the playground or school gates. We need to continue to try and minimise people mixing.

We want to thank you for your continued support in these incredibly challenging times for everyone. We would ask that you continue to work with and support our schools with the same consideration you have done so throughout this pandemic.

Please take care and stay safe.

Yours sincerely,



Colette Dutton  
Director of Children's Services  
Wigan Council



Professor Kate Ardern  
Director of Public Health  
Wigan Council