

PRIVATE AND CONFIDENTIAL

10 July 2020

Dear parent/carer,

This year has been extremely challenging for everyone with the flooding in February, followed closely by the Covid-19 pandemic and the pressure on parents and carers has been immense during these difficult times. Our thoughts are with those that have sadly lost loved ones during this pandemic and we offer our deepest sympathies.

Home schooling has become a constant for many of you and this has been hugely demanding. Teaching is rightly a skilled profession and the pandemic has meant education has been significantly disrupted. We have however heard of so many inspirational stories of how hard parents, carers and teaching staff have worked to help children continue with their learning over the past four months.

Many children are leaving school this summer without having the opportunity to sit exams and without being able to celebrate their time at the school in the usual way. We understand how difficult this must be for them and we wish them well for their future.

We are aware that these extraordinary circumstances may have an effect on their mental wellbeing and we feel that this is an opportunity to highlight that information on local and national mental health and wellbeing support and advice is available on Herefordshire's Wish website and can be found by searching for www.wisherefordshire.org/mentalhealth.

The Government has announced that all schools in England will return in September for the Autumn term. Our focus continues to be on the health, safety and welfare of children, staff and our communities. We have worked with schools and Public Health England to ensure that safety measures have been in place throughout the pandemic and will continue to do so in preparation for when all pupils return in September.

Returning to school is extremely important for all Herefordshire children. Education is a fundamental part of your child's development.

At the time of writing the number of confirmed Covid-19 cases in Herefordshire is very low, at less than 5 in the last two weeks. Residents will be kept informed if the cases in Herefordshire significantly increase and there are local plans in place should any action be required.

National Government has confirmed that schools are not expected to be open during the summer school holidays. This includes not being open for the children of key workers or for vulnerable children.

Please make sure that you keep an eye out for updates from your child's school. Our Herefordshire Council website will have the latest information on individual school closures. To view this information please visit: www.herefordshire.gov.uk/schoolclosures

The School Transport Team are currently reviewing their safety procedures based on the latest government guidance, ready for when pupils return in September. A separate communication about school transport will be issued shortly and we will be following further government guidance as it becomes available. Parents and carers who have children eligible for school transport will receive a letter from our transport team and you will also receive information directly from your school.

We have included some frequently asked questions and answers at the end of this letter.

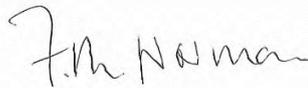
We hope that this letter provides you with supportive information and reassurance about the steps that we are all taking to ensure that pupils can safely return to Herefordshire schools in September.

Thank you for your supporting your child and their school since lockdown began in March. We wish you an enjoyable summer and we will continue to support Herefordshire schools to welcome your child back in September.

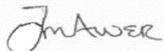
Yours sincerely



Chris Baird
Director of Children & Families
Herefordshire Council



Felicity Norman
Cabinet Member for Children & Families
Herefordshire Council



Jo-anne Alner
Managing Director (Herefordshire)
NHS Herefordshire and Worcestershire CCG



Jane Ives
Managing Director
Wye Valley Trust



Karen Wright
Director of Public Health for Herefordshire
Herefordshire Council

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Here are some questions and answers to inform you

Is it safe for my child to go back to school?

Schools have taken advice from experts in public health, health and safety, council staff, school leaders, unions and the Government.

Schools have safely remained open throughout the lockdown period for children of key workers and vulnerable children. The numbers of children attending have grown over the past month and the Government's recommended measures have been put in place to ensure their safety.

Each school is updating its risk assessment before children return in September, to promote the safety of pupils and staff and to limit the risk of transmission of Covid-19, taking into account the latest Government guidance and advice from Public Health England.

To reduce transmission of the virus in schools the schools will:

- Ask all adults and children with Covid-19 symptoms to stay at home for 7 days and get tested as soon as possible. Following a negative test result children or adults who are well will be able to return to school.
- Have good hand washing and respiratory hygiene 'catch it, bin it, kill it' practices in place.
- Keep the number of people who are in contact with each other to as low as possible.
- Clean the school and equipment more often.

If a child or someone they live with becomes unwell the pupil will not be able to attend school. This also includes staff and children and families who have been contacted by the NHS Test and Trace programme and are asked to self-isolate. If a staff member is unwell they will not attend school. If anyone shows symptoms of Covid-19 they will need to self-isolate in line with Government's guidelines.

Your child's school will be able to provide you with more details and update you about the measures that will be in place ready for September. Please follow the guidance that your school provides.

Will school staff be wearing PPE (Personal Protective Equipment)?

The latest advice is that people working in schools do not need to wear PPE unless they would usually do so, for example to meet a child's personal care needs. If a child develops coronavirus symptoms in school they will be kept at a safe distance from other children and staff in the school and will be safely supervised by an adult who will be wearing the recommended PPE until the child can be collected.

Will children going back to school be able to be tested for coronavirus?

The intention nationally is that test and trace becomes more widely available. At present children who do not have coronavirus symptoms do not need to be tested, but children with symptoms should be tested. The Government has provided online guidance for this: www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-stay-at-home-guidance

You can request a Covid-19 test calling 119 or through the on-line portal: www.nhs.uk/ask-for-a-coronavirus-test

Does my child have to go back to school?

It is expected that all children will return to education in September for the beginning of the Autumn term, unless there is a clear medical reason for your child not to do so.

What should I do if my child is worrying about going back to school?

Talk to your child in a positive way about school and that they will be able to see their friends, teachers and other staff members again. Help them understand that some of the other children may be anxious and to talk about their feelings with their friends and teachers. Help them to understand how their school will work and how by socially distancing from others and washing their hands properly will help to beat the virus. Let them know that school may seem a bit different, but that the teachers and staff are doing everything they can to make sure that it is safe for them to attend.

The Department for Education has produced the following videos which show what it has been like for children returning to school during the summer term. You may find these videos useful to share.

For primary school children: www.youtube.com/watch?v=BiefaCf2fvY

For secondary school children: www.youtube.com/watch?v=foQuulWonl8

If you have any questions or concerns please do contact your school, but please bear in mind that they will be closed during the summer holidays.

What's taking place over the summer in Herefordshire?

There are many different activities that are taking place across Herefordshire over the summer. Lots of activities are available online and can be accessed from home. It's really important for everyone to enjoy themselves and to do so safely, so please talk to your child about this, including how to stay safe when they meet up with others.

For the latest information on Summer activities please visit the Herefordshire WISH website: www.wisherefordshire.org/summeractivities

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