

Dear Parents and Carers,

You may have heard in the news over the last 24 hours that the 'R' rate in the North West region has risen above 1 and this has caused some schools and councils to change their plans for wider re-opening. This clearly remains a difficult and challenging time for parents and schools as we try to decide upon the best way forward.

Based upon local data, St Helens Council and the Director of Public Health for St Helens still remain committed to the wider re-opening of schools. I have copied below some of the information that I have received that is specifically relevant to the St Helens area:

The R number for local districts like ours with small populations do not give a true reflection of what is really happening on the ground. They will change very rapidly one way or another and have huge confidence intervals which would mean we could never be assured what the real reproductive number is with a level of certainty.

I can, however, provide you information on laboratory confirmed cases. In the height of the pandemic we saw in St. Helens 175 positive cases (week 14 - 29th March - 4th April). However, over the last 3 weeks we have seen a significant decline:

Week 20 (WC 11th May) = 40 Week 21 (WC 18th May) = 8
Week 22 (WC 25th May) = 3 Week 23 (this week to date) = 3

I am assured that the rates have reduced significantly. On top of this, recent data has been produced at Middle Super Output Level (small geographies) and I can confirm that nowhere in St. Helens was in the top 5% of areas with high infection rates in Cheshire and Mersey.

In light of the recent developments, our school leadership team and our Chair of Governors have reviewed our risk assessment and have taken the following decisions in relation to our planned phased re-opening.

Our plans for our Y6 pupils to return on Monday 8th June are unchanged and we look forward to welcoming these children back into three small groups from this date. Information has gone out to all parents with regard to staggered start and finish times and arrangements during the day. Originally, we identified Y6 as the first year group to return as we wanted these pupils to have a defined end point to their primary education and we felt that they were the pupils most able to understand and follow social distancing. Our views on our ability to offer Y6 a necessary and safe end to their primary education remain unchanged.

Our plans for our key worker children and vulnerable children remain unchanged. These children will be divided across three groups as from Monday 8th June. We have sent information out to all parents detailing the changes to drop off and collection points. We expect that we can continue to accommodate these children in a safe and appropriate environment.

We have taken the decision to delay the re-opening for Y1, Reception and Nursery pupils by at least one week. Therefore, the provisional date for a return for Y1 pupils is now Monday 22nd June and Reception and Nursery is now Monday 29th June. I realise that this may be disappointing for some of you but we believe the delay is necessary to get a full understanding of the impact of some of the lockdown release measures on transmission rates across the local community before planning for these very young children to return into school. We remain concerned that these children are not able to understand social distancing and there will be an increased risk of transmission within the

school environment. Some of you may feel a sense of relief that you do not need to make a decision immediately over whether you want your child to return and you can take some more time to see how the situation locally unfolds. I will update you again on Friday.

We all remain committed to responding to this challenging situation in a considered and appropriate manner with the best interests of the children, our staff and our whole school community at the heart of our decision making. These are uncertain times and I thank you all for your continued patience and understanding.

Take care and keep well.

Mrs P Farnell
Headteacher