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Our Ref KD/AB
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Date 15 July 2020
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Department for Children and
Young People

Parents/ Carers of pupils in Bury schools

Dear Parents/ Carers

RETURNING TO SCHOOL IN SEPTEMBER 2020

Since the announcement that schools would be closed to all but the children of key workers, the majority of Bury schools have remained open including during the Easter break, summer half-term and Bank Holidays. Initial risk assessments were amended when planning for the opening of schools to more pupils in June. I am delighted that the pupils who have returned have settled quickly back into their learning. They have enjoyed seeing classmates face to face.

On 2nd July, the Secretary of State for Education published guidance to support schools in their planning for the return of all pupils, in all year groups, to full-time education from the beginning of the autumn term. Our schools are now finalising their plans for this return with headteachers leading on revisions to risk assessments to enable this to be a safe and positive experience for all families. Central to this risk assessment process is the safety of pupils, staff and the wider school community and each school's Governing Board will be scrutinising the risk assessment before approval. As we move to the summer break, headteachers will share their plans with you and I ask that you continue to work in partnership with your child/ren's school/s in following their guidance.

Pupils will be placed in 'bubbles' made up of a number of children. At the heart of school plans will be minimising the number of people that come into contact with each 'bubble'. Plans may include different start, break, lunch and finishing times for different year groups. Every effort is being made to offer a broad and balanced curriculum from the start of the term however, there may be some slight changes to subject areas and teaching staff, particularly in our high schools. Pupils travelling to school on buses or trams are asked to keep within their 'bubble' wherever possible and will need to abide by the latest guidance for travel.

As part of the risk assessment, I have asked schools to include in their plans should there be a suspected COVID-19 case, a confirmed case or an outbreak. This is to ensure that should these situations arise action can be taken swiftly by school staff and by parents at home.

As parents/ carers you may have concerns about the return to school in the autumn. Please discuss any concerns you may have with the school so that you can be reassured.

It is expected that all pupils will return and any non-attendance, without appropriate reason, will be classed as an unauthorised absence. Information about attendance from September can be found on our website by following the link <https://www.bury.gov.uk/CHttpHandler.ashx?id=21095&p=0>. If you have any questions over the summer break regarding attendance then please contact the Education Welfare Service via schoolattendanceteam@bury.gov.uk.

Please be aware that each school will have completed their risk assessment based on their unique setting, cohorts, staffing and resources. Therefore, approaches to the full re-opening in September will differ from school to school. Many schools are also considering a phased start to the new school year so not all pupils will return on the same day. We look forward to welcoming all pupils back following the initial staggered start.

All these measures will be under constant review as the guidance changes so that a return to full normality can happen as soon as it is safe to do so.

I would like to place on record my personal thanks to the staff in school who have continued to work since the initial closure to all but children of key workers was introduced. I am particularly grateful to headteachers and their governing boards for their resilience and fortitude in very challenging and ever-changing circumstances.

Finally, my thanks to you for supporting your child/ren's learning at home. My best wishes for the summer break to you and your family.

Thank you in advance, for your continued support when schools return in the autumn.

Yours sincerely

Karen Dolton

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