

Children & Young People
Oldham Council, Civic Centre, Level 3,
West Street, Oldham, OL1 1UT

Dear Parents and Carers

As you know, it is the government's plan that all children and young people, in all year groups, will return to education full-time from Monday 8th March. Our schools and colleges in Oldham are delighted to be welcoming them back. It is vital that our children and young people return to school and college, for their educational progress, for their wellbeing, and for their wider development.

The Chief Medical Officers from all four nations in the United Kingdom have made it clear that the overall risks to children from coronavirus (COVID-19) in relation to education settings is low and that the risks associated with not being in school certainly outweigh those of being in school. We want to take this opportunity to tell you of the measures we have taken in Oldham to ensure that your children can return to education safely, and how you can help us. For secondary school and college students we have also enclosed the latest school news from Government.

Oldham has seen the rates of COVID reducing since the start of lockdown in January. This has been due to the efforts of all residents in following the restrictions. Schools and colleges have worked really hard to ensure that they are safe for pupils and staff. This includes support for hand washing, environmental cleaning and social distancing.

We now need to ask you for more and to play your part as we begin the wider reopening of schools and colleges from Monday 8th March.

I am sure you will agree that regular school/college attendance is essential for the educational, social and personal development of children and young people. As such attendance will be mandatory for all pupils from Monday 8th March. Secondary schools and colleges will use this week as a phased return to support the testing arrangements and they will provide remote education for all pupils not yet expected to attend on-site. All pupils will be fully back in the classroom the following week (Monday 15th March).

It is important that all students return according to their school's guidance. It will be important for all students to connect with friends, continue with learning and to access support for their next steps in education or training. Schools/colleges have carefully planned programmes which will help students to achieve the grades and understanding to succeed. Expert careers advice and guidance will be available.

To support the wider reopening, school/college staff are being offered rapid testing for COVID twice a week to ensure that any cases are picked up quickly. In addition, secondary school pupils and college students will now also be offered these tests. The tests are carried out using rapid lateral flow devices which means that there is a result available in half an hour. Initially these tests will be carried out in school, but then pupils will have the option to do these at home. These tests are not mandatory but are strongly recommended as they will help identify any cases and prevent the spread of coronavirus. If you have children at a secondary school, you will be asked if you agree to them being tested. Testing is also available for parents and carers and where your child goes to a testing site you can also play your part and take a lateral flow test.

Additionally, Oldham Council has put in place a process to support schools in dealing with any suspected or confirmed cases of coronavirus in educational settings.

If you have concerns about your child returning to school or college because you consider they may have specific risk factors, you should discuss these with your school or college. They will be able to explain the actions being taken to reduce risks.

It is everyone's responsibility to ensure that staff and children remain safe whilst they are in an education setting.

We would be grateful if you could play your part by:

- Not sending your child to their school or college if they are showing coronavirus (COVID-19) symptoms, or someone in their household is showing symptoms.
- Arranging a test if you or your child develops symptoms and inform your school or college of the results (<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronaviruscovid-19/testing-and-tracing/>)
- If the test is positive, follow guidance for households with possible or confirmed coronavirus (COVID-19) infection, and engage with the NHS Test and Trace process (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-stay-at-home-guidance>)
- Not congregating around the entrance or exit if you are dropping-off or picking-up your child at the start and end of each day. Please maintain a safe social distance from others during these periods.
- Following the national guidance on coronavirus, including regular hand washing, social distancing, use of face coverings and limiting the contact you have with people outside of your household.

It is important that you help schools and colleges to implement these actions by following the advice set out in this note.

We also know this has been a worrying time and we hope you are now in a better position after the government have released more information on how GCSEs, AS levels, A levels, and vocational and technical qualifications (VTQs) will be awarded this summer.

Students will receive grades awarded and determined by teachers, with pupils only assessed on what they have been taught.

Teachers will be able to draw on a range of evidence when determining grades, including the optional use of questions provided by exam boards, as well as mock exams, coursework, or other work completed as part of a pupil's course, such as essays or in-class tests. No algorithm will be used.

Teachers will submit grades to exam boards by 18 June, allowing as much teaching time as possible before teachers make their assessments.

Results days for GCSE, A level and some vocational qualifications will take place in the week of 9 August – moved forward from the week of the 23 August. These earlier dates provide additional time for appeals to be completed, so students reliant on those outcomes to achieve their university offer have the best chance of accessing a place.

Exams and assessments will continue in VTQs where they are needed for students to demonstrate the necessary professional standard in an occupation.

Schools, colleges and other educational settings will conduct multiple checks – such as checking consistency of judgements across teachers and that the correct processes were followed - to ensure as much fairness as possible.

Every student will have the right to appeal their grade.

Finally, I know the vast majority of children and young people will be pleased and excited to return to school. We are committed to doing everything we can to make that return safe and successful. If you have any questions or queries from this note please get in touch so we can support you to achieve this in every way we can.

Thank you for your support.

Yours faithfully,



Gerard Jones
Managing Director of Children &
Young People



Katrina Stephens
Director of Public Health