



## **Thursday 28<sup>th</sup> May 2020 – Delay to School Opening for More Children**

Dear Parent/Carer,

I am writing to you all to update you following an announcement from Lancashire County Council yesterday. Lancashire County Council has decided that schools **SHOULD NOT OPEN** to more children on **1<sup>st</sup> June 2020**. Before clarifying how the announcement will impact our school I feel it is important to briefly remind everyone of our current context.

Over the last three weeks we have formulated a plan in line with a Government instruction for more children to return to school. I have communicated this with you all. I have been liaising closely with Lancashire County Council and the school Governing Body in formulating this plan. Every aspect of our plan to **open our school to more children** has been agreed **IF** the Government say it is the right time. Yesterday, just before 7:00pm, I heard Lancashire County Council had released a statement with new advice for schools. Later in the evening this was confirmed to me by Lancashire advisors to schools. The statement can be viewed here:

<https://www.lancashire.gov.uk/coronavirus-updates/schools/advice-to-schools-on-reopening-to-more-pupils/>

### ***What does this mean for our school?***

This advice for schools in Lancashire has now changed. This is based around the 5 tests not having been met in our region based upon risk assessment. In particular, Lancashire County Council feel they are:

- *Not confident that the range of operational challenges, including testing capacity and PPE, are in hand, with supply able to meet future demand.*
- *Not confident that any adjustments to the current measures will not risk a second peak of infections that overwhelms the NHS.*

As a Lancashire County Council school, **we will be** following their advice. Therefore we will be proceeding with option **A** of our plan. Option **A** within our plan states:

- A) If the Government **do not** decide to reopen schools to more children:
  - i. Home school for Reception, Year 1, Year 2, Year 3, Year 4, Year 5 and Year 6 will continue on the 1<sup>st</sup> June 2020.
  - ii. Vulnerable children and key worker children are still asked to apply for an emergency care place as they have been doing. They should do this via the usual methods by Friday 28<sup>th</sup> May.

Whilst we do have an agreed plan in place, our **local Government** have now decided all schools in Lancashire **SHOULD NOT** open to more children at this time as they have assessed it is not yet safe to do so for our community. Whilst I fully understand the **emotions** and **issues** attached to any change of decision, it is essential that we continue to work within the advice for everyone as our priority is the safety of our children, staff and wider community.

We will therefore be continuing to run home school for all year groups on Monday and our emergency care for those children who qualify for a place. If you qualify and have not yet applied for an emergency care place, please email: [bursar@aughtonchristchurch.lancs.sch.uk](mailto:bursar@aughtonchristchurch.lancs.sch.uk) as soon as possible. Confirmation

letters of this care will be emailed out as usual tomorrow. All other children will continue to receive home-school emails on Monday 1<sup>st</sup> June.

Whilst the best thing to for all of our children is to continue to work within the local and central government advice, I am fully aware many of you will already have heard of **Lancashire County Council** announcement via media last night. I want you to know I would have wished to have communicated this to you myself.

Whilst my clarification today is hopefully helpful, I understand that receiving information in this way of an evening is not helpful to anyone and can cause upset, anxiety and uncertainty for families. I can assure you, that I have had this conversation with Lancashire. I also want to clarify and assure you all of three points:

1. Our priority is the safety and well-being of our children and their families. Following guidance from our Local Authority on when it is best to open school to more children is therefore crucial.
2. Our school **have a plan** that I've shared with you all. It has been **agreed with Lancashire County Council** and fulfils current **Government** criteria set out. We feel our school is ready to open to more children **when** it is advised it is right to do so. Currently our **local Government** are advising us **not to open** in this way after their recent risk assessment as they are highlighting regional issues.
3. I have let **Lancashire County Council** know that it would have been helpful and best practice to consult and inform Headteachers of their decisions first so I could inform you first of what this meant for our school in a more appropriate way.

I believe that good communication of information at this time is critical. I have tried to ensure that our school communication has been clear, transparent and supportive. Once I have any further information regarding a decision when our school can open to more children, I will be communicating with you all again.

Finally, I'd like to reiterate something from my letter to you all last week which is very relevant today:

*"it is important to stress I am totally aware of the emotion and feeling from a variety of people. I understand and respect the different views held within the many sections of society. I would like to stress that opinion is wide and varied and it would not be accurate to suggest that any one person is completely right in either how they feel about the situation **or** negate how they feel school should respond."*

I also said in my letter last week that this is the *start of a journey we must walk together*. I hope everyone understands that no journey will be without changes and in particular this unprecedented situation will continue to present us with changes and challenges in every aspect of our lives as we move forward. Indeed, how we work most now be more fluid. All I can continue to do is to reassure you all that the governors, staff and I have every child at our school at the centre of all decision making and will continue to work for you all within the advice we are all given. This in itself can prove incredibly challenging.

I now look forward to welcoming our emergency worker children back to school on Monday 1<sup>st</sup> June 2020 and continuing **home school** via email for the rest of the children in school.

I'd like to take this opportunity to wish you, your families and in particular all the children well.

Thank you

Mr D Kennedy

**Headteacher**