



**Dear Parents/Carers**

## **Welcoming pupils safely back to school**

As they look forward to the return of all children in September, schools right across Halton are working hard to put in place the measures needed to minimise the risk of spreading Coronavirus, and keep children, young people, teachers and parents safe.

While schools have remained open throughout lockdown for vulnerable children and children of key workers - with small numbers returning briefly before the summer holidays - in September, pupils of all ages will be welcomed back.

Over recent weeks, Government has issued a range of guidance to help schools to prepare for the safe return of pupils. In the guidance, schools have been asked to minimise the number of contacts that a pupil has during the school day to reduce the risk of transmission.

This means the new school year will see:

- Children staying within smaller groups
- Staggered times for the start/end of school and breaks
- Changes to the layout of the school and in the classroom
- More hand washing throughout the day
- Increased cleaning of surfaces and equipment

In addition, the Council's public health experts have been working with schools to put in place procedures to respond should a pupil or member of staff test positive for coronavirus.

Talking about the upcoming return Cllr Tom McNerney, Executive Board member for Children and Young People said: "Over the past five months

families have spent lots more time indoors together; children have not been able to play with friends and many households have had added financial pressures – together, these things have put a real strain on some families.”

“We also know that some children and young people have found it really difficult to do school work at home and so there will those who have done little or no learning since schools closed five months ago.”

“That’s why it is absolutely critical that we now get all children and young people back safely into classrooms for the start of the new term - not just for their education, but for their overall wellbeing.”

“I appreciate that some families may still be anxious about their children and young people returning for the new term and I would urge these parents and carers to engage with their school so that they can be reassured of the measures being put in place to keep their children safe.”

“I want to thank headteachers and their staff for all the hard work they have done in getting schools ready. I know that they are really excited to welcome their pupils back in September.”

The Council also wants to support those children and young people who may have their own concerns about returning to school. It has set up a back to school guide on its website with information about the changes children can expect to see and resources parents can use to talk to their children. It is available at [www.halton.gov.uk/backtoschool](http://www.halton.gov.uk/backtoschool)

In advance of reopening, individual schools will let you know of the changes or updates that they are implementing using school apps, websites and with letters home.

Yours faithfully



Tom McInerney

Lead Member for Children, Education and Social Care