

Phased re-opening discussion meeting 14.5.20

Lisa Fraser (LF) outlined Birmingham's current position re making preparations to support schools to open when it is safe to do so.

Discussion centred around:

- preparations to reopen – a wide range of differing approaches to suit schools' individual circumstances were discussed
- differing opinions were expressed re the year groups selected to return – would Y5 have been more appropriate? Would it be more appropriate to have the children of working parents in?
- when the return date would be confirmed; some felt the return date of 1.6.20 was not feasible
- whether it is morally right for children to return to school – is the City going to take a stance similar to that taken by Liverpool?
- how to achieve social distancing with younger children
- whether secondary schools could give additional support to Y6 transition
- the need for a risk assessment tool
- staff in school consulting with their unions re health and safety

Concerns were expressed re PPE, BAME staff. Clarification was also sought on where schools stand legally on refusing to comply with a return date - LF advised that a conversation should be held with BCC in the first instance.

ACTIONS

- LF to share discussion points from the meeting with the Leader
- LF to raise queries raised in the meeting with in conversation with the DfE tomorrow
- LF to share HR advice in daily update
- LF to share risk assessments with school leaders early next week

QUESTIONS FROM HTs

- What support, if any, can I expect if I decide to remain closed on 1st June and throughout June? Morally, it seems the right thing to do whilst C19 numbers are still so high, especially considering chance of another spike in numbers. **Birmingham's current position is to support schools to follow government guidance on schools' reopening. Schools must ensure that the school environment is safe for both pupils and staff.**
- When will we know that "the science" says we can open?- the Government have said we are expected to open on 1st June if the science says it's safe. **We are reliant on central government making information on 'the science' available.**
- Children become infected at 1-2 % but infect at the same rate as adults. In large schools (as mentioned by medical officer yesterday) that means 100s of vectors infecting others. Is this something the LA are seeking clarification on? **As above.**
- Key worker requests have gone through the roof in last 24 hours. How will we manage the volume of children outside of the 'chosen' year groups? Especially when the staff % in diminishing by the minute due to union response and vulnerable category guidance? **Schools must ensure that the school environment is safe for both pupils and staff. Guidance provided by the DfE gives some clarification on the prioritisation of year groups should health and safety be compromised by pupil numbers. Schools should prioritise key workers and vulnerable children in the first instance. Government guidance is that all vulnerable children should now be actively encouraged to attend school.**