

Dear Parents/Carers

I wanted to update you on the Covid-19 situation in Herefordshire at this time when many parents and carers are faced with decisions about sending their children to school/child care settings, given the Government announcement about the opening of schools to Years reception, one and six in primary schools from 1st June.

Firstly I would like to thank you for what you have been doing through these challenging times. Keeping children at home will no doubt have provided an opportunity for quality and enjoyable times with children in some cases, but will also have presented some real challenges for parents, carers and children.

There are low numbers of cases in Herefordshire, on average in the ten days before the 25th May there were just 2.5 confirmed cases per day in Herefordshire. NHS Test and Trace service was launched nationally on 28th May 2020 and this means that testing will be available for everyone who has symptoms. This will allow people who have been in contact with someone who has coronavirus to be contacted and asked to self-isolate for 14 days, vastly reducing amount of people the virus can be passed on to.

- Modelling suggests that the chance of getting Coronavirus in schools is low being just a few percent higher than staying at home. Though by staying at home students do not benefit from the positives of being in school such as seeing their friends and teachers as well as school based education.
- Children are much more likely not to have symptoms or if they have symptoms for them to be mild.
- Locally schools are doing risk assessments using effective measures to further reduce the risk of children and teachers becoming infected in schools.
- Some parents have expressed confusion as to why reception, year 1 and 6 are going back to school as younger children are less able to social distance. Experts believe that these years are most able to benefit by being in school. For the younger years they are learning key social skills and are the least able to learn remotely. Year 6 is a key transition year and therefore would benefit from being in school to prepare. Science suggests that the rest of the community continuing to follow guidance such as maintaining social distance and follow handwashing and hygiene advice has a bigger impact on keeping Coronavirus low than any model of schools returning.

As parents and carers you can help to keep coronavirus cases low in your local area by following and reinforcing these effective risk reduction methods with your children and young people:

- Self isolating if you have symptoms and contact the NHS test and trace service
- Washing hands for 20 seconds at key points in the day
- Continuing to maintain a 2 meter social distance from people outside your household
- Following good respiratory hygiene by sneezing into a tissue "catch it, bin it, kill it" and coughing into your elbow

Yours Sincerely



**Karen Wright**  
**DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC HEALTH**