

## *Annex 5 - Update on the planning for the wider re-opening of schools*

### **Summary**

1. Following the Prime Minister's statement on 10<sup>th</sup> May about phased changes to the national lockdown arrangements, schools in York have started to extend opening to additional cohorts of children where the capacity of their buildings and staffing allow them to safely do so. It is important to note that schools have remained open throughout the period of national lockdown for the children of key workers and vulnerable children (those known to social care and those with education, health and care plans). Since the 23<sup>rd</sup> March York Schools and Academies Board (YSAB) has been meeting three times a week to ensure that schools across the city, regardless of status, have worked collaboratively to meet the challenges posed by this period of national emergency. This report provides an update on the work of YSAB and outlines the position with regards to the wider opening of schools from 1<sup>st</sup> June 2020.

### **Background**

3. Following the government's decision to close schools to all but the children of key workers and vulnerable children the local authority has been working closely with the city's headteachers to provide them with support to implement the Department for Education's guidance. In planning for extended opening of schools in York schools and the local authority have worked closely with the public health team and followed the advice and guidance of the city's Director of Public Health. The work between the local authority and schools has built on and strengthened the already strong relationship and has resulted in a high level of collaborative working between the local authority and schools which has been highly valued by headteachers. The York Schools and Academies Board (YSAB), which represents the city's multi-academy trusts, the teaching schools, research school and the local authority, has been meeting three times a week since 23<sup>rd</sup> March. This has proved to be a very valuable in ensuring that headteachers and local authority have been able to share their planning and agree collaborative

approaches to meeting the challenges of the current situation. The local authority has, in addition, been meeting daily with the headteachers of the local authority maintained schools in its role as the responsible body for those schools. Between late March and the present time the local authority and YSAB have also had weekly meetings with the representatives of the city's professional associations and unions. These meetings have included ASCL, NEU, NASWUT, UNISON and GMB.

4. On 11<sup>th</sup> May the Secretary of State for Education provided details on the plans to begin the planning for the extended opening of schools from 1<sup>st</sup> June, if the five tests outlined in the government's recovery plan; 'Our Plan to Rebuild' were met. These plans were that primary schools should plan to open to children from specific year groups (nursery, reception, Year 1 and Year 6) if possible to do so based on the individual circumstances of schools. Secondary schools were asked to extend their opening to Year 10 and Year 12, to supplement the online learning for these year groups. In the case of Year 10 and Year 12 it is not the expectation that this would mean that they will return to school full time before September. In planning for extended opening of schools in York schools and the local authority have worked closely with the public health team and followed the advice and guidance of the city's Director of Public Health. On 9<sup>th</sup> June 2020 the Prime Minister announced that plans for all primary school pupils to have time in school before the end of the summer term had been abandoned. This means that approximately 80% of children will not return to school before September.
5. Headteachers in the city are keen to see a full return to school and remain very concerned about the gaps in learning and the impact on pupils' social, emotional and mental wellbeing from the extended period out of school. However, in responding to the government's plans for the extended opening of schools they have had concerns about how to achieve this safely for children and staff. In practice this means that schools are unable to extend their opening for all primary children in the specific year groups that can now return to school. They are continuing to prioritise school places for key workers and vulnerable children. This means that not all children from reception, Year 1 and Year 6 are able to access a school place as the limits on class size, capacity of buildings and numbers of teaching and non-teaching staff makes this impossible. Headteachers are continuing to work together to share planning

and adopt consistent principles to ensure that they are acting collaboratively and that the communication from schools is as far as possible consistent for parents, staff and pupils. The York Schools and Academies Board is currently working on the challenges of preparing for September and this includes a focus on improving the support for home learning which is a priority given the extended period of time that children are spending outside of formal education.

6. Schools in York have adopted the following key principles which define the agreed position on the wider opening of schools:
  - The safety of children and school staff is paramount;
  - Each school/trust will make evidence informed decisions on how they will open for additional year groups based on thorough risk assessment. This will determine the wider opening date and provision in each school;
  - The priority is to ensure that all vulnerable children have a school place and are attending school;
  - Extending the numbers of children in school will be done in a carefully managed way, based on the capacity of each school, both in terms of staffing and space;
  - Ensuring the support for home learning is prioritised;
  - Schools in York were working towards wider opening from 1<sup>st</sup> June if individual circumstances allow.
7. Headteachers have worked with their staff and parents to assess capacity and likely demand and have based their wider opening plans on the results of their risk assessments. The local authority is continuing to work closely with them to ensure that they are able to operate safely and in line with public health guidance. As a local authority we are meeting daily with the headteachers of maintained schools to ensure that robust risk assessments are in place to under our duties as the responsible body. Under the local management of schools maintained schools headteachers and governing bodies are responsible for health and safety and decisions about the closure of schools lie with them and not with the Council.

## **Consultation**

8. YSAB continues to meet weekly with the teaching and non-teaching unions and professional associations and has shared copies of the documentation it has developed with them. Copies of these documents are appended to this report.

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