

This matter is being dealt with by:

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**Nottinghamshire
County Council**

2 June 2020

Dear Parent or Carer,

I write about your child's return to school, especially if you were one of those families who were expecting this to happen yesterday or this week and have now been contacted by your headteacher to say that this return has been postponed. My purpose in writing is to offer you an explanation as to what has changed and why those changes have happened so late in the day.

I want to start however, by apologising to you and to your family, including your child(ren) if this has caused you additional worry, stress or upset during what is an already difficult time for families. I know that many parents and carers will have agonised over the decision as to whether to send their children back to school, and that having reached a decision to do so, the delayed start must be frustrating. I am sorry for that.

Following the Government's initial guidance of the 18th May, and the confirmation from Boris Johnson that the five conditions for re-opening had been met on the evening of the 28 May, the Local Authority has been in talks with schools, headteachers, trade unions and others as to how schools could reopen safely from, but not necessarily on, the 1st June. Those discussions included sharing a large and detailed risk assessment tool for headteachers to use. Headteachers have been complimentary of the tool, finding it comprehensive and useful.

At the end of last week, however, it became very clear that we could do nothing to reassure some of the larger teaching unions that it was safe for schools to reopen on Monday; they simply disagreed that schools should open any earlier than the 15th June, and for one union, not until September. They stated that any school that did reopen would be reported to both the Health and Safety Executive and the local press. I felt that your headteacher should be aware of what the unions had said so I wrote to all schools on Friday afternoon. As a consequence, headteachers, supported by their colleagues and governors, had to reach an unenviable decision to either reopen as planned, or postpone. I wish to stress that whilst the decision was ultimately for the headteacher, the timing of it was beyond either their control or influence.

Nottinghamshire County Council has long held the belief that decisions regarding schools should be decided locally i.e. by the school, its headteacher and its Governing Body. The Council remains of that view. We believe that the people who know their school, their colleagues and their children and families best, are best placed to make decisions regarding the school. Those people are your headteacher supported by their staff and

Governing Body. My role, and that of my officers is to assist and support headteachers in making an informed decision and supporting their right to do so.

I hope this letter clarifies the events over the last week or so and helps share the dilemma faced by your child's school and in particular its headteacher. Once again, I would wish to apologise for your experience over the last few days.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Colin Pettigrew', with a stylized, cursive script.

COLIN PETTIGREW

Corporate Director for Children, Young People and Schools
Nottinghamshire County Council