

Statement from Councillor Alex Dale, Cabinet Member for Young people at Derbyshire County Council – 22 May 2020

“We support the Government in its ambition to see schools opened up to more pupils as soon as it is sufficiently safe to do. To do this we’ve been working flat out to support schools in interpreting the guidance and planning to admit the target year groups announced by the Prime Minister on 10 May.

“This is an incredibly complicated issue to work through. Unfortunately, the guidance so far issued by the Department for Education has not always been entirely consistent or clear on some key aspects and this has created some issues for schools and the council.

“Due to the challenges that we’re having to work through with schools, it is clear now that many primary schools in Derbyshire will not be able to admit the additional year groups (reception, year one and year six) that the Government had envisaged by 1 June. This is because the latest advice from the Government is that children need to be 2m apart in classrooms, and that it is not safe to rota children through the week and more time is needed to work through these issues.

“The Department for Education have been absolutely clear with us that the priority remains the children of key workers and those who are vulnerable. In turn we’ve made clear to all schools that from 1 June their first priority should be aiming to increase the number of children from these groups.

“Then we have advised that they should also continue to plan for how they might accommodate children from the other key year groups (reception, year one, year six, year 10 and year 12).

“Every school in Derbyshire is different and their approaches to offering more places back in classrooms for our children and young people will vary.

“If schools do admit children on 1 June from the key year groups they will need to make sure they have the room to do this safely.

“We hope that secondary schools will be able to offer some face to face learning for year 10 and year 12 students, due to the greater flexibility they have in terms of space.

“We will continue working with schools to identify when they will be able to admit whole-year groups in the coming weeks, although for many of our schools this will still be challenging.

“I want to thank headteachers, school employees and governors who have worked extremely hard over recent weeks as they plan for 1 June. I’d also like to thank parents and carers in advance for bearing with us and their local schools while we continue to work very hard to deliver on our collective ambition to get more children back to school as soon as possible.”