

## Statement from Steve Reddy

Parents in Liverpool are being advised that schools in the city scheduled to reopen this coming week will do so, unless they are contacted directly by their child's school and told differently.

In a joint statement, Cabinet member for education, Cllr Barbara Murray, and Director of Children and Young People Services Steve Reddy said: "We recognise there is a balance between controlling the virus and the damage to child wellbeing, mental health and the impact of even more lost learning.

"With less than 24 hours to go, we are not asking schools and parents to change their plans. As a Tier 3 area which has a lower infection rate than others, the schools that are scheduled to reopen this week should do so, including primary and special schools as well as secondary schools for vulnerable and key worker children.

"As we do have concerns with respect to the dramatically increasing infection rates, we will closely monitor attendance of staff and pupils over the next few days. We will support families and staff who chose not to attend school tomorrow and will manage the situation on a school by school basis to ensure safety at all times.

"No parent will be fined if they keep their child away tomorrow for safety reasons. All teachers and pupils are encouraged to use the free Covid testing service for people without symptoms - details are at [www.liverpool.gov.uk/smarttesting](http://www.liverpool.gov.uk/smarttesting).

"We will work with school leaders and teams to ensure risk assessments are reviewed and updated if necessary, and shared with staff.

"[We have offered priority lateral flow testing to all school staff at four of our community testing sites](#), and will work to support schools to ensure they can roll out more staff testing and then pupil testing. Initially this will take place in secondary schools and will take some time to organise effectively.

"Where Headteachers alongside their staff decide that they cannot safely re-open, they will have our full support. The council will continue to work with and support schools if this happens. At this stage less than 24 hours before school starts this is hard to predict and we will keep this under constant review and monitor staff and pupil attendance.

"Alongside ensuring all school staff can have access to testing, we would strongly argue that vaccination needs to be prioritised for school staff - alongside other key front line worker in all sectors."