



**Steven Forbes – Executive Director of
Children’s & Adults’ Services**

London Borough of Hounslow
Hounslow House, 7 Bath Road
Hounslow, TW3 3EB

Date: 21/05/2020

Dear Parent/Carer/Guardian,

We are writing to you about the recent government announcement about the re-opening of primary schools.

We are aware that the last eight weeks have been very difficult for many families. Along with the loss of routine, families have had to get used to home schooling, with many working from home, whilst others have been furloughed or have lost their only form of income. Many of us have experienced the loss of direct contact with friends and relatives. This has had an impact on us along with the uncertainty of what the future will bring. Many people hoped the Prime Minister’s speech on 10th May would provide some clarity and certainty, but it appears to have created more questions and concerns. This is the reason we are writing to you.

We have been in touch with the Department for Education and have emphasised that in Hounslow we are determined to do the right thing for our children, families and schools. This may not fit in with the totality of expectations or timescale of the Government. We want the Borough’s children to return to school, but only when it is safe for them and the staff in schools and when we are confident that each school, as they are all different, can adapt to the new school day and way of working.

We are asking our schools to work with us to establish what safe numbers will be and this will differ in each school, because the buildings are all different. We don’t want parents to rely on a date suggested by government, that schools are unable to meet. It may take some of our schools a few days or weeks beyond the Government’s initial 1st June date to be able to ensure that children can return to school safely. That is why we are sharing our approach that is based on doing the right thing in the right way at the right time. We will ask schools to keep you all informed about developments and hope this will make you as parents feel more confident.

We won’t be able to answer some of your questions or deal with all your concerns immediately because we are all in a place none of us have been in before and it may take as some time and thought to come to a solution with our local schools. However, we hope that the work we are undertaking with all schools in Hounslow might help you to understand and support the approach we are taking.

We have been in contact with Headteachers and are supporting them in planning for the future. We have working groups of primary and secondary Heads that are addressing these issues that will help us plan for a safe return of more children to our schools within an achievable timeframe. Our schools have worked incredibly hard over the last eight weeks, doing their best to support children at home, as well as over 700 children of keyworkers and those deemed to be vulnerable, who have continued to attend each week. Any plans to increase the numbers of children in our schools for the rest of this term will also have to take these continuing numbers into account.

Finally, we know that many people will have their own views about what will work and what will not work. This is a challenge that we will manage, with safety as our priority. We know that we may not be able to resolve everyone's concerns immediately as we work through this new challenge. We will however work together and do our best to meet the needs of as many children as possible.

We would ask that you support your child's school to put in place the plans and arrangements they may need too to ensure the safety of staff and pupils. This may ask you to do things that the school would not normally ask; for example, staggering arrival times and start of school or class times, not entering school buildings adhering to one-way systems of moving on school grounds. By working together, we are confident we can make progress.

We do understand that ultimately the decision to send your child/children to school lies with you as a parent/carer/guardian. It is for you to decide whether you wish for your child/children to return to school, and we respect your decision. I do want to reassure you that in making the decision not to send your child/children to school during this time, you will not receive any sanction from the Local Authority.

Yours sincerely,



Steven Forbes
Executive Director of
Children's & Adults' Services



Councillor Tom Bruce
Cabinet Member for
Education and Children's Services