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Date: 22 May 2020

Our Ref: SD/SR/CJ/HL/ce

Your Ref:

Dear Parent / Carer / Guardian,

We are writing to you following 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, 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. During this time our schools have worked really hard to support children at home and will continue to do so. This has had an impact on us, along with the uncertainty about what the future brings. Many people hoped the Prime Minister's speech on the 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 Government and have emphasised that in Telford and Wrekin, we are determined to do the right thing for our children, families and schools. This may not fit exactly with their expectations or timescale. We want the Borough's children to return to school, but only when it is safe for them and for the staff in schools to do so. We are asking our schools to work with us to establish what numbers they can safely manage and this will differ in each school, because the buildings and their layout are all different. The Government's priority is for Nursery, Reception, Year 1 and Year 6 children to return to school as soon as is manageable. However, not all of these year groups will return at the same time. Each school will have its own plan based on its own circumstances. That is why we have not specified a date on which schools will widen their opening in Telford and Wrekin. We believe that this is a decision for each school to arrive at based on what is manageable and safe. So, it is about doing the right thing in the right way at the right time. We have asked schools to keep you informed about developments as they unfold and hope this will also make you as parents feel more confident and informed about the arrangements at your child's school.

We won't be able to answer some of your questions, because we are all in a place none of us have been in before. However, we hope that the work we are undertaking with all schools in Telford might help you understand and support the approach we are taking.



We have working groups of primary and secondary heads that are addressing those issues that will help us plan for a safe return of more children to our schools, within an achievable time frame. Telford and Wrekin Council has taken a decision, amongst only a few Local Authorities in England to fund and provide the initial Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) needed to open, demonstrating our commitment to ensuring that when schools do open, they have PPE supplies to draw upon when these are needed. We are also working with our trade unions to ensure that they understand the approach we are taking.

Our schools have worked incredibly hard over the last eight weeks, doing their best to support children at home as well as over 900 children of key workers and those deemed to be vulnerable, who have continued to attend school 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 and won't work. We totally support and respect your decisions at this time. This is a challenge that we will manage, with safety as our first priority. **Ultimately, it is a decision for central Government as to whether schools will open more widely in the coming weeks.**

We would ask you not to direct any of the inevitable frustrations you may experience in the coming weeks, at your child's school or its staff. None of them are responsible for the position in which we all find ourselves. By working together we are confident we can make progress.

Thank you for taking the trouble to read this letter.

Yours sincerely



Cllr Shaun Davies
Leader, Telford & Wrekin Council



Cllr Shirley Reynolds
Cabinet Member for Children, Young People,
Education & Lifelong Learning



Clive Jones
Executive Director
Children's & Family Services



Heather Loveridge
Director for Education & Skills

