

Families Directorate

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Dear parent/carer

A final letter from me before the end of what has been the most challenging academic year, I suspect any of us can remember.

I'd firstly like to thank you for your patience and all you have done to support your child during these unprecedented times. You've been personal educational providers, coaches and motivators and so much more. I'd also like to personally thank all the staff in schools for the work they have done to keep schools open to vulnerable children, and the children of keyworkers, and then to additional year groups. In Waltham Forest the number of schools that have remained open and the overall pupil numbers that have been attending has been phenomenal.

As the Government has announced, it is expected that all children and young people will return to school in September. I would ask for your continued patience as all schools are using the period between now and the end of term plus much of the holiday period to plan how this will work for children.

Detailed risk assessments are being drawn up and signed off to ensure schools are as practically safe as is possible to welcome all children and young people back. Schools, with support from the Council and others are putting appropriate control measures in place and planning how they will safely group children on their return to school. It won't be schools going back to normal but rather the "new normal" where schools operate in as child focused way as possible whilst maintaining safety. Each school will communicate its plans for September as soon as it is able to and I am sure many will have already done so.

We are working with Public Health England and other partners to make sure our local plans are effective and regularly updated.

In terms of the next academic year the Government have clearly indicated that attendance at school is compulsory. The shared belief of the Council and schools is that we very much want to support children and young people back to school. Whilst we hope and expect that most children and young people will immediately bounce back into school, we recognise that a minority will need additional support. Our collective view is that the health and wellbeing of all children is just as important as their educational outcomes, although both are clearly closely linked. Getting all children safely back

to school in September is something I am sure we will all support together and as parents you have an absolute fundamental role in this.

In terms of the curriculum in the forthcoming academic year, the Government has indicated that a full curriculum should be delivered with some scope for short term adjustments. We are encouraging our schools to fully meet this expectation whilst also supporting them in recognising the impact the last four months have had. From September in several schools you may see a “recovery curriculum” being delivered for a term or possibly slightly longer. This is to support children and young people back into effective learning. Alongside this we are also supporting schools to plan how they will mitigate the impact of any future short term need to keep groups of children and young people away from school should the need arise. We are supporting schools, where necessary, in refreshing their remote learning and access to online resources.

Limitations on availability of public transport and the pressure of all pupils returning to school is another area the Government has recognised. We are actively working with our schools to promote walking or cycling to work and would particularly urge all parents and carers that live within two miles of their child’s schools to walk or cycle. There is a travel survey for parents, carers and students that we would encourage you to complete. It can be found at <https://bit.ly/WFSchoolTravel2020> and feedback from this survey will inform our work with schools. Please look out for publicity around local schemes to support alternative means of travel to school that lessen the burden placed on public transport.

As the summer holiday begins, we acknowledge that this will bring another set of challenges for families. With this in mind we would encourage you to visit www.walthamforest.gov.uk/holidays, which will provide information on finding childcare and things to do with your children over the next six weeks. We will be updating this regularly but also encourage you to sign up for the Councils Families newsletter and follow us on twitter (@wfcouncil) as we will be regularly sharing information on things to do, including taking part in virtual activities commissioned from local artists and organisations.

Please enjoy what I hope will be a restful summer for you and your nearest and dearest. Keep an eye out for opportunities to engage over the holiday period and look out for messages from your school or the Council regarding the start of the new academic year in September.

Stay Safe.

Yours sincerely,



David Kilgallon
Director of Learning & System Leadership