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Dear Parents & Carers,

Ealing Special Schools: our approach to more children attending school

We hope that this letter finds you and your family well. We recognise that this has been a very difficult and challenging time for everyone. We know that many families have been greatly impacted by the Coronavirus situation both economically and socially and some have lost friends and loved ones. Our thoughts go out to each and every one of you.

A big well done to all the parents out there trying their best to support their children's learning and special needs at home, we know it hasn't been easy.

Most schools in Ealing are already open and supporting the needs of children of critical workers, vulnerable children and those with additional needs. In the case of **special schools, all six schools have remained open and the numbers of children attending has risen steadily** since the beginning of the lock-down. We are very proud of the effort made by our schools to remain open, offering advice and guidance to families as well as supporting home-learning.

Ealing Council has adopted a cautious and phased approach to expanding the number of year groups in primary schools. We all want children and young people back into education. It is the best place for them to learn and it is good for their mental wellbeing, general health and social skills. To combat inequality, it is even more important that children from less advantaged households, who may not have access to computers and restricted home learning, go back to school. **Ealing schools should only open to more pupils when they are ready. No school will be forced to reopen its doors to meet an arbitrary deadline.** Our public health professionals are continually reviewing the most up to date data and have confirmed that our cautious phased approach is the right course of action.

In addition to offering places for the children of critical workers, and those with additional needs identified by schools, our secondary schools will be working to develop structured face-to-face support to Year 10 and Year 12 pupils who are due to take their exams next year. This will not be a return to full timetables but rather some support to supplement pupils' home-learning.

The government has asked primary and high schools to prioritise these pupils because they are at very important points in their education. However, please be aware that the government is continuing to review the rate of infection, as well as scientific advice on risk, and may change decisions if necessary.

Our approach for **special schools** is to continue to encourage pupils to return where possible and schools are ready to do so. This may include part week provision for pupils. These decisions are best made by your school and the Council is there to support them. Schools are working closely with the health service and the Council to manage this carefully. **Special Schools have completed detailed risk assessments, consulted staff and put in place protective measures.** These are reviewed regularly.

All parents considering sending their children back to school will have concerns about the Coronavirus risk. Schools will be putting in place a number of additional measures to reduce the risk of infection, examples include:

- Small Groups or individual support to allow Social distancing wherever possible.
- Additional cleaning of all touch points, toilet facilities and classrooms throughout day
- Children eating lunch in their own classroom/outside area
- Isolating and sending home pupils/staff who are unwell
- Parent drop off/collection to be organized on a queue basis –staff to collect child at car
- Ealing transport service have also strengthened their bus protocols
- Use of PPE by staff in cases where a child needs direct personal care
- Increased hand washing during the day

We know that across all ethnic groups, older people are at greatest risk from this disease. Therefore, it is important to consider children and staff who live in intergenerational households and the possible impact on their loved ones, particularly if they are from a Black, Asian or minority ethnic background.

No parent will be fined if they choose not to send their children back to school at this time.

Important information - please read carefully

- Special schools have good arrangements for keeping in touch with parents during the pandemic, please discuss any concerns you have about the well-being of your child while at home or school with them

- If your child has specific health needs, please seek the advice of their GP about attending. For children who are 'extremely clinically vulnerable', they still need to be [shielding](#) at home.
- If there is someone in your home who is at greater risk of coronavirus due to being elderly, pregnant or have medical conditions, your child can still attend school. Please speak to a member of staff if you have specific concerns. If there is someone in your home who is [shielding](#) as a result of being 'extremely clinically vulnerable', your child should only attend school if social distancing can be maintained, otherwise we will support them to learn at home
- If you have specific concerns and worries about your child coming into school in June or July, please contact your child's school directly to discuss these concerns and ask any questions about the arrangements put in place.

Other important messages

If you have any questions and are not sure who to talk to – contact the **Family Information Service** on **020 8825 5588** (Mon-Fri, 9am – 5pm) or email children@ealing.gov.uk for advice and guidance.

If you or someone you know needs to use a food bank or is having a problem getting food, visit www.ealingfamiliesdirectory.org.uk where from the home page there's a link to 'Food banks and food distribution' information as well as the latest information on Free School Meals and their extended eligibility.

From the home page you can also access resources for parents during COVID-19 with links to activities for children, information on keeping children safe online and more.

If you or someone you know is suffering any kind of hardship and would like some advice and help, contact **Ealing Together** on 020 8825 7170 or visit the 'Help for residents' page at www.ealingtogether.org

I hope that you find this letter useful and that it reassures you the council has the safety and wellbeing of your children as our first priority.

Yours sincerely



Councillor Julian Bell
Leader of the Council



Councillor Yvonne Johnson
Deputy Leader of the Council & Cabinet Member for
Schools and Children's Services