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Dear Parents & Carers,

Gradual return to nursery and primary school classes in Ealing

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 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. 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 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, schools will be working hard to welcome back other groups of children in a gradual and sequenced way according to their own staffing levels. These children include:

- Children in nursery classes (N2)
- Children in Reception
- Children in Year 1
- Children in Year 6

The government has asked schools to prioritise these groups of children because they are at very important points in their development. **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. The final decision on return to school for these groups will not be made until 28th May.**

We are planning for the return of some new groups of eligible children **using a phased approach throughout June.** Each school is different. Heads and governing bodies are best placed to know what measures are needed to be put in place to enable them to reopen safely. They know their pupils and staff and their personal circumstances. The council has provided schools with guidance to assist them in making these decisions.

All parents considering sending their children back to school will have concerns about the Coronavirus risk and so we'd like to share with you what measures will be put into place to minimise the risks of infection.

Schools are being supported to return children in phases and in smaller groups to reduce the risks of infection. The size and sequencing of these groups will vary from school to school depending on the layout of classrooms and outdoor spaces.

Schools will be putting in place a number of additional measures to reduce the risk of infection including:

- Increased use of outdoor space, social distancing.
- Staggered start and finish times
- Alternative arrangements for breaks and lunch time
- Increased hand washing during the day (e.g. coming in from outside)
- Supervision of hand washing for a minimum of 20 seconds
- Frequent cleaning and disinfecting of objects and surfaces that are touched regularly.

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.

Headteachers will now be considering the availability of staff and how space will be used.

Some schools will be ready to open for more children before others. In other cases, schools will open later in June. Schools will only open after they have completed a detailed risk assessment, consulted staff and put in place protective measures. We ask for your understanding and patience while your child's school makes appropriate arrangements.

Important information - please read carefully:

- If your child is in one of the groups being invited back to school - the school will soon be contacting you to outline the protective steps they have taken to reduce the risk of infection and provide the safest possible environment for your child to learn and play; and to inform you of times and dates your child may be invited back to school.
- If your child is not in one of the groups listed above, teachers will continue to provide guidance and support for home learning. It is hoped that all children will be able to return to school in the near future.
- If your child has specific health needs, please seek the advice of their GP about returning to school. For the few 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 returning to 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.

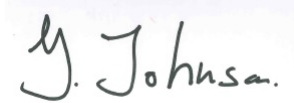
If you or someone you know is suffering any kind of hardship and would like some advice and help, contact **Ealing Together** on 020 8825 7170 or visit the 'Help for residents' page at www.ealingtogether.org

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
Lead of the Council



Councillor Yvonne Johnson
Cabinet Member for Schools and Children's Services