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15 June 2020

Dear Parents and Carers

**RE: Kingston Schools**

The decision to close schools to the majority of our pupils in March was difficult; however, it was necessary to ensure the safety of pupils, teachers, all those working in our schools and their families.

Throughout the pandemic, schools have remained open for vulnerable children and the children of critical workers, including during the school Easter holidays and on bank holidays. We would like to thank all our local teachers who have worked hard to support these children, as well as adapting creatively to support all those children who are learning at home. We are very proud that throughout the busiest times in March and April, school attendance in primary schools in Kingston was amongst the highest in London.

From 1 June, primary schools have opened for more children in Reception, Year 1 and Year 6. Early years' settings have also extended their offer. Last week nearly 3,000 primary children were at school, which is an amazing achievement. From 15 June, secondary schools will begin to welcome groups of students in Years 10 and 12 and are looking forward to reconnecting with their pupils.

As a Council, our priority is to keep local residents safe and well, as we support the gradual lifting of the government's lockdown rules. Schools are an integral part of this plan. We know that all

children and young people benefit from attending school, but for children who are shielding and have underlying health needs, and for most pupils in primary and secondary schools, this is not yet possible.

The government recently decided that it will not be possible for all children in primary schools to return to school this term. That will be disappointing for many children, families and schools. Some schools may have capacity to admit some children beyond the prioritised year groups, perhaps for a few days each week or on a part-time basis. Schools' ability to increase their offer will depend on a number of factors, such as the nature of their school building, the space to maintain social distancing, the availability of teachers and other school staff, and the number of vulnerable children and children of critical workers they will need to continue to support. These decisions must be made by each school. We know that headteachers and the governing body will make that decision based on the health and safety of their pupils and staff.

It is right that individual schools make these decisions based on their own assessment of risk. The Council and our children's services provider, Achieving for Children, have been providing advice and support to schools to support their decision-making. Our priority, and the priority of local schools, has always been the health and safety of our children and young people, as well as the staff within local schools.

The work that schools have delivered over the last few months has been very impressive, despite the frequently changing expectations and guidance from the government. They have acted creatively and responsibly. The next few months will continue to be challenging. We would like to thank our local schools, children, young people and their families for all their support. It is not over yet, but if we work together, we know that we will be able to come through this, stronger than ever.

Yours sincerely,



Councillor Caroline Kerr  
Leader of Kingston Council



Councillor Diane White  
Portfolio Holder for Children's Services including  
Education

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