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21<sup>st</sup> May 2020

Dear Parent / Carer,

### **Coronavirus (Covid-19) Update – Phased Reopening of Schools**

As the Swindon Borough Councillor responsible for Education, I am writing to let you know what Swindon Borough Council and Swindon schools are doing to be prepared to open schools from 1<sup>st</sup> June 2020. Please note that I am writing this letter in accordance with the current Government guidance. Please do regularly look at our website [www.swindon.gov.uk](http://www.swindon.gov.uk) where you can see the latest news which we are updating on a regular basis.

Firstly, I want to thank you for your contribution to the national response to the coronavirus pandemic. I know that being at home with your children and supporting their continued learning, alongside your own work and other commitments, will have been challenging. Thank you for playing your part to help reduce the spread of the virus.

As you will know, many schools have been open in order to provide education for children of critical workers and vulnerable pupils and I would like to thank the teachers, support staff, governors and everyone else who has worked so hard to make this possible.

On the 10<sup>th</sup> May 2020 the Government announced its intention to open schools for additional children and year groups from 1<sup>st</sup> June 2020. This would start with pupils in nurseries and those in primary school reception, year one and year six returning to school. This will be in addition to children of critical workers and vulnerable students in all school years.

Secondary schools and alternative providers are considering their approach to offering some face-to-face time for pupils and we are working with special schools on their plans to gradually increase the number of children and young people on site, again from the 1<sup>st</sup> June 2020 at the earliest.

I know that many parents will have concerns about schools opening for additional children and year groups and I want you to know that the Council understands these concerns. I would like to reassure you that the safety of everyone who attends the school is our first priority. We are working with schools to support their plans for a gradual and phased reopening. Their plans will be guided by a thorough risk assessment, taking into account classroom space, the site of the individual school, staffing levels and the needs of their pupils. We would like to be clear that the Government has stated that schools will only open more widely if the level of new infections continues to decrease and the Government's other conditions are met and it is therefore important that you continue to check official websites for updates.

All schools are working hard to respond to the guidance provided by the Department for Education and each school will be developing their offer based on what they can safely provide. It is therefore likely that the offer will be different for each school, depending on each of their circumstances. Schools may therefore not be able to offer full-time provision for all the relevant year groups and open for additional pupils at exactly the same time. I know that schools are contacting parents to outline the offer and response that they are able to make, which will be based on the risk assessment that they have been asked to complete. Please continue to be patient and supportive of schools as they work on their own best offer.

The Government guidance is clear. It is not compulsory for parents to send their children to school at this time and there will be no penalties if you choose to keep your child at home. I therefore wish to be clear that this is your personal choice. However, if you do choose to keep your child at home, I strongly encourage you to continue to ensure that they are educated and to stay in contact with your school in order to provide them with the best possible education. I also wish to be clear that even if your child is not attending school they will remain on the school register. I do not want any parent to feel pressured into taking their child off roll because of this situation. I repeat, there will be no penalties if you choose to keep your child at home at this time.

All schools will continue to provide a home learning offer to pupils not accessing support on site where possible and will also keep in regular touch with the families of all pupils, whether or not they are attending school.

Further information for parents and carers can be found at the following website:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/closure-of-educational-settings-information-for-parents-and-carers/reopening-schools-and-other-educational-settings-from-1-june>

If you are the parent of a child with an Education, Health and Care Plan, we will also be writing to you in the next week, via your child's school or setting, to update you on the temporary changes made by the Government to the SEND legislation and what this means for your child. We will also be sharing this information via the Local Offer.

Thank you again for everything you are doing to help in these difficult times. We have a great community here in Swindon and I know that so many people have really risen to the challenge by helping other people in so many ways. Please continue to be supportive of our schools during these challenging times.

If you have any questions regarding this letter, please do contact your school in the first instance.

Thank you for your continued support of our schools and of our town.

Best wishes



**Cllr. Russell Holland**  
**Deputy Leader, Swindon Borough Council**