

Families Directorate

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**Learning & Systems Leadership
Town Hall, Forest Road, Walthamstow, E17 4JF**

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Dear parents,

Re-opening of schools from 1 June

Following the Government's announcement that schools should prepare to open for more children from 1 June we have been working with our schools to plan how this can be delivered in Waltham Forest. The focus for both the Council and Headteachers remains the safety of children, their families and school staff.

We are very aware of the difficulties being faced by families throughout the borough. The prospect of schools reopening requires schools to balance the duty to protect and keep children safe and the need for children to access education and social opportunities. For all of these to be achieved we all need to be confident in the decisions being taken, therefore we are writing to outline the approach that the Council is taking in partnership with the borough's schools.

We are extremely proud of the response so far from schools in Waltham Forest who have been working tirelessly throughout the lockdown period: providing places for children of key workers; supporting our most vulnerable children and families; providing materials to support families with their children's home education; and delivering free school meals and vouchers to those eligible. We would like to thank our Headteachers, and all school staff - from teachers and teaching assistants to school business managers, site service officers and cleaners – for their continued dedication, compassion and care provided across our community.

Last week we had conversations with headteachers of both maintained schools and academies in order to discuss their first thoughts about the safest and most appropriate ways to open to more children. The following principles will be followed agreed:

- Safety of children, families and school staff remains at the heart of every decision
- Vulnerable children and their families continue to be a priority for schools and the Council
- Schools will continue to provide crucial support to the community's response to COVID by providing places for children of key workers
- Waltham Forest does not expect all schools to be open to a full-time basis to all year groups identified by the Government from 1 June. It does not expect all schools to re-open to all additional year groups later in the Summer term.

- Waltham Forest does expect schools to develop plans for opening that support the needs of their community and plan for a safe increase of pupil attendance, following appropriate risk assessments. It expects schools to plan based on the size of their school site and the numbers of staff they have available. Based on these considerations' schools may decide to be open for one or more-year groups, on either a full or part time basis. There cannot be a model that fits all schools.
- Waltham Forest does expect schools to continue to reassess their plans and act appropriately, extending opening to further years when it is safe to do so.
- Following national advice that it is not necessary for staff or pupils to use PPE unless there are already being used as part of existing education provision or duties (such as when changing nappies or other personal hygiene activities) Waltham Forest does not expect schools to have a blanket approach to the use of PPE.
- Schools will be expected to ensure that appropriate steps are in place to reduce risks to pupils and staff. This will likely include creating 'bubbles' of no more than 15 children and a member of staff, hand washing facilities throughout the school and staggered play and lunch times.
- Delivery of a full national curriculum will continue to be difficult. Waltham Forest schools are expected to continue to provide access to educational activities to both children on site and those who remain at home. However, it is expected that following the lockdown period, schools will need to focus on social, mental and physical well-being, positive engagement with learning and returning to a school environment.

Using these principles, we trust and support our Governing Bodies and Headteachers to agree appropriate models for a safe return to school for their pupils. We understand that this will result in many schools having different delivery models as it will depend on the space available on the school site and the number of staff the school has.

We realise that as we work to widened school opening it will continue to be difficult for many families. We will continue to provide updates and information via the Council website. If your child is offered a place at school over the next few weeks and you decide not to take this up, you will not be fined for their non-attendance. If your child, or someone in your house is shielding or has medical concerns, please do speak to your school to discuss the best option.

Waltham Forest Council, in partnership with our schools will continue to work to provide education to all children in the borough. We thank you for working with us to ensure that schools can continue to be safe environments for our children and staff.

With kind regards



David Kilgallon
Director of Learning & System Leadership