



*Parents and Carers of  
Children and Young People*

Surrey County Council  
County Hall  
Penrhyn Road  
Kingston upon Thames  
Surrey KT1 2DN

21 May 2020

Dear Parents and Carers

We wanted to take the opportunity to write to you following the recent government announcements about reopening schools. We recognise that the changes made to the education system in March, as part of the national pandemic response, will have had a significant impact on family life and learning for children and young people.

During the last 8 weeks our school leaders, teachers and support staff have responded by providing on site care for vulnerable children and the children of critical workers, and this continues as we move forward. We are extremely proud of the way our schools have responded, with the vast majority of schools in Surrey staying open for these children since the school closures were announced in March, and many have remained available throughout the Easter break, weekends and bank holidays.

Schools have been supporting home learning for children by using both innovative and traditional approaches to try and ensure that every child can access learning at home. The resilience shown by your children's schools over the last few weeks has been remarkable, and we are sure you share our heartfelt gratitude for how the community in Surrey has responded to this outbreak. We also express our thanks and admiration to all parents and carers who have risen to the challenge with enthusiasm and creativity to support and continue their children's learning at home; this has often been in the most challenging circumstances alongside other caring responsibilities and home working.

There are further challenges ahead in planning together as an education partnership with school leaders and parents for the reopening of schools as we find a new normality over the coming weeks and months. The government has set out a roadmap for recovery that includes the phased return of some children to school, no earlier than 1 June 2020. Central to our work to support schools during this phase of planning is the safety of your children and school staff.

The ambition is for children attending Special Schools that school leaders will consider in the best interest of all a phased return of children, no earlier than 1 June. This is not dictated by your child's year group as is the case in mainstream schools but based on your child's individual health, social care, wellbeing and education needs. Your child's school may offer you the option for them to return, however be assured that if you are worried about this your school will listen and agree next steps with you.

We recognise that this will require local decision making as every school, child and family is different. Family circumstances and children's needs vary and not every child will be ready to return at the same time or at the same pace.

School leaders will need to take into account the individual and collective safety and wellbeing of children and staff, the number of staff available to work and the physical constraints of indoor and outdoor space when determining how, when and which children will return this summer term.

However, the reality is that each school will need time to plan and implement a unique roadmap that is safe and sustainable for their school community. This may mean that not all children will be able to return to school on 1 June 2020 and whilst some may agree with this decision, for others it will be disappointing news that their child cannot return to school as quickly as they had hoped.

We know that you will continue to take an active role in supporting your child's learning at home, and schools will continue to provide all the resources they can to support you to do this, particularly for those children who are unlikely to return until September.

We ask you to continue to be patient, supportive and compassionate with your school leaders and staff and remember that everyone is doing their best to return to a new normal as soon as it is safe to do so.

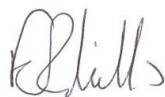
We wish you and your family well and hope that you continue to stay safe during this time.

Yours faithfully



Julie Iles

**Cabinet Member for All-Age Learning**



Liz Mills

**Director for Education, Lifelong Learning  
and Culture**