

LB/HM

June 2020

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Dear Parents & Carers,

Thank you to everyone who completed our recent parents' survey where we sought your views about schools reopening. We received 8,246 responses which is an incredible response and we are very grateful to you for taking the time to give us your views. The results of our survey will provide the Education Service and our schools with very helpful information to support our planning for schools reopening in August. We know that this continues to be a challenging time for all families and that you are keen to know what will happen next. I'd like to thank you for your continued patience and support.

In line with the current advice from the Scottish Government, we are planning for our children returning to school in August. We are focussing on the health and wellbeing of our children and staff and we have placed Nurture at the heart of our planning, recognising that we will all need support to adjust and recover after the lockdown period. We are working closely with all Head Teachers on how we can safely bring children in to our school buildings for some in-school learning whilst also continuing with the learning at home. This will be very different for all of us and we understand that this model of 'blended learning' will present a challenge for everyone including families in terms of work and childcare arrangements.

The Scottish Government has confirmed that schools should start back a week earlier than we had planned and therefore Monday 10th and Tuesday 11th will be in-service days for staff with groups of pupils returning on Wednesday 12th August. At the time of writing this letter, the physical distancing continues to be 2 metres. This means that we are having to think very differently about how we deliver learning in our school buildings, especially as each building is unique in terms of available space, capacity and staffing.

Our in-school learning will be small groups of children coming in to school on a rota basis. We are working hard to keep siblings that attend the same school together, wherever possible. We are doing our best to maximise the number of children who can safely be in school at any one time. Whilst we are aiming for 50% of the school able to attend at any one time, in some of our primary and secondary schools this may not be possible. Please be assured that we will continue to keep this under review and do everything we can to maximise the amount of time your child can safely spend in school. We understand that this will mean some continued disruption. I apologise for this but it is essential that we follow the physical distancing advice from the Scottish Government which means we are unable to have more children in school at the same time. Given the different style of buildings and outdoor opportunities across the county, each school is developing their own plan that supports the needs of their school community as much as possible. Each school will contact you next week to inform you of what that will mean for your child/ children.

The Scottish Government has outlined its commitment to ensuring that 'blended learning' does not last longer than it needs to. We share this commitment and will follow all necessary guidance to bring all of our children and young people back to school as soon as it is safe to do so.

Following the issue of *Coronavirus (COVID-19) Phase 3: Guidance on Reopening Early Learning and Childcare Services* by Scottish Government on 15<sup>th</sup> June 2020, East Lothian Council's Early Learning and Childcare Team are now looking at the implications that this has for Early Learning and Childcare settings in East Lothian. The team are working with all settings to help them develop a model that meets the Scottish Government guidelines. Further information on access to early learning and childcare places will be shared with parents and carers once we have established how this will work in each setting.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Lesley R. Brown".

Lesley Brown  
Chief Operating Officer (Education)