

**Monday 20<sup>th</sup> April**

**Coronavirus (Covid-19) Update - Letter to Essex Parents and Carers**

Dear Parent / Carer,

Firstly, I want to thank you for your contribution to the national response to the Coronavirus pandemic. For the majority of you, being at home with your child(ren) and supporting their continued learning, alongside your own work and wellbeing, is a significant challenge in what are both unprecedented and worrying times. However, we do know that this action is helping to reduce the spread of the virus and helping to save lives.

You will be aware that last week the government confirmed that the lock down will continue for at least another three weeks. However, alongside this news is constant speculation about when and how schools across the country will be reopened. I want to confirm that at this time these messages are pure speculation – neither your school nor the local authority has any information about what plans the government are considering once the lockdown is eased or when that might be.

Re-opening schools will be complex, even if that is partial re-opening. The priority, of course, will be to ensure that it is safe for all children, staff and parents when they return to school. At present, for those few families that are accessing school provision, you will know that social distancing is being practiced alongside good hand hygiene, and whilst some learning is being supported, it is far from the reality of normal school life. For schools to re-open, clear guidance on social distancing will be required as well as ensuring that the majority of staff can return; we are aware that for some their personal circumstance means that they are required to 'shield' or live with family members who are shielding, which may mean that they need to socially isolate themselves and not return to work.

As with all decisions the government are making in relation to coronavirus, the scientific evidence will be required to underpin the timing of the decision to re-open schools as well as the process for this.

To support all parents at this difficult time, yesterday the government launched a series of measures for families to assist with remote education, wellbeing and general support. The guidance can be found here alongside a whole list of on-line resources for you to use. If your child(ren) has SEND need, support can also be found in these resources.

[https://www.gov.uk/guidance/supporting-your-childrens-education-during-coronavirus-covid-19?utm\\_source=cab989cd-0d5a-4ac7-9145-6445159c785f&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_campaign=govuk-notifications&utm\\_content=immediate](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/supporting-your-childrens-education-during-coronavirus-covid-19?utm_source=cab989cd-0d5a-4ac7-9145-6445159c785f&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=govuk-notifications&utm_content=immediate)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/closure-of-educational-settings-information-for-parents-and-carers/closure-of-educational-settings-information-for-parents-and-carers>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-online-education-resources>

In addition, from today, the BBC are launching bitesize daily lessons, details of which can be found here - <https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/dailylessons>.

As you will be aware, schools are also providing as much support as they are able to with home learning resources.

We have also asked all schools in Essex to make regular contact with all families during the school closure period. Therefore, if you haven't already had contact from your school during this time, this is something that will begin to happen from this week. This is an opportunity for you to engage with your school with any support you may need with home learning and to discuss any wellbeing concerns you may have. If everything is all fine, please also report that to your school.

I want to assure you that there is no expectation that your child(ren)'s education should continue as it would if they were attending school daily. All schools and the local authority fully understand that during this unprecedented time, normal education across the country has been suspended. Therefore, any daily support, both in terms of academic learning and physical and emotional wellbeing you can provide is to be applauded, and please do not worry about your ability to replace your child(ren)'s normal education during this time. When schools do re-open, they and the local authority will work as hard and as quickly as possible to bridge any gaps in your child(ren)'s learning.

If you have any queries concerning this letter, please raise them directly with your school.

On behalf of your school and the local authority I would like to thank you for your continued support during this difficult time.

Yours sincerely,



Clare Kershaw  
Director of Education  
Essex County Council