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# Trinity Primary School Parent Council

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Edinburgh

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**To all those involved in making decisions about Edinburgh pupils' return to school in August 2020.**

Since Trinity Primary School closed to pupils on March 20<sup>th</sup> 2020, children have been learning at home. Our experiences are undoubtedly very similar to those of families across the UK; we are all dealing with financial and employment challenges and the loss of support networks in the form of extended family and friends, whilst trying to support and nurture our children during a time of significant change.

Throughout this period Trinity Primary School has kept us informed and supported. Parents and children have received regular updates and messages of support, schoolwork has been issued on a daily basis, children have received feedback and daily contact from their teachers, learning equipment and resources have been made available and every effort has been made to retain a strong sense of community. We would like to start this letter by thanking Head Teacher Jacqueline Scott and all of the staff for their tremendous efforts in what must have been a very challenging period. They have done a fantastic job in looking after all of us.

At a local authority and national level, we recognise that a great deal of planning will have taken place in order to try and prepare for schools reopening in August 2020. However, from a parental point of view both the process and the outcome are very disappointing. The announcement that children in Edinburgh would only attend school for 33% of the school week, despite the fact that several schools (including our own) can accommodate more children than this within the current safety guidelines, was disappointing. The lack of further clarity and the ongoing political arguments about where the fault lies has resulted in parents feeling unsupported, frustrated and anxious after a long period of incredibly intense and exhausting effort. It is hard to believe that some of these feelings are not being picked up on by our children.

We appreciate that this is a very complex and changing situation and that some decisions are made nationally by the Scottish Government and some are made more locally by the City of Edinburgh Council. We are therefore writing to all of you at the same time in the hope that you can, between you, work together to resolve the situation more satisfactorily.

## **Our Position**

The proposals for Edinburgh as they currently stand do not fulfil the basic criteria of Getting It Right for Every Child.

It is in everyone's best interests for as many children to return to school as is safe within the current guidelines.

Every school in Edinburgh should be allowed to accommodate as many children as it can under the current safety guidelines.

Getting It Right For Every Child would, in normal circumstances, mean that every family who wants to send their children to school is able to do so. Attendance for all children for the full school week as quickly as possible should therefore be the expectation and ultimate goal of all parties. Given that these are exceptional circumstances we feel that it is right and fair to expect to start the school year with all children attending for at least half of the school week (and more where possible).

Where a school cannot safely accommodate 50% attendance, that school should be extended into local community spaces and staffed accordingly. The additional resources required for this to happen must be made available.

Parents need clear communications so that they can plan their work and childcare. There are real and significant health and wellbeing risks of not sharing information with parents (and hence with their employers) in a timely fashion; it is likely that jobs will be lost and people may have to rely on grandparents for childcare. With five working days until the summer holidays it is important to recognise that this communication will need to take place over the summer holidays when schools are closed.

All children will be learning at home to some extent for the foreseeable future, and this is may be the main learning method for families who are shielding or self-isolating. Whilst our experience of learning at home has been positive, it is very clear that this is not a universal experience within the city or across the country. Amongst the parents who attended the NPFS session with John Swinney, for example, only a third of children had had any form of virtual teaching (live or pre-recorded) and only 52% were receiving regular feedback on their work. Further, Trinity Primary School staff will be working in school from August and therefore less able to support those learning at home. We suggest, therefore, that the home element of blended learning must be delivered through a centralised online educational resource. This would ensure consistency across the country and allow school staff to concentrate on the children physically in their schools. This centralised learning should be delivered for as long as any child remains learning at home.

Please work together to ensure that this is delivered. Parents and Parent Council volunteers do not have the time or the capacity for political arguments and blame shifting.

We very much hope that you are able to resolve this to the best of your collective abilities.

Many thanks in advance

Trinity Primary School Parent Council

## **Distribution list**

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