

Parents/Carers

**DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES AND SKILLS**

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Your Ref.

Our Ref. LR/cd

21 October 2020

Dear Parents/Carers

I wanted to write to you all as we approach half term - and what a half term it has been! The hard work and commitment from headteachers' and school staff across the borough has been nothing less than inspirational and I am pleased to see that the vast majority of children have settled back into their schools. I am told by many school leaders how proud they are of the way your child/children have successfully managed being back – they have been amazing! The way they have adapted to the new arrangements and really embraced these new challenges has been a credit to them and to you.

I am very aware that some children have struggled given the scale of the readjustment after so many months away from school for the majority of them. Parents have told me of the impact this has had upon their families and I sincerely hope this eases over time. I have been encouraged by the extra support from the schools, education and health professionals to try to relieve children's anxiety and support a return to learning. Our high attendance figures across the borough reflect this.

Some schools in Solihull have had to close bubbles for a while as a result of a positive case and ask some children to self-isolate. We know the pressure this then puts on you as families but I would like to thank you for your on-going support with this. It has been an unexpected positive from this awful situation we are facing to see the remote learning which is being developed to maintain learning where pupils are at home. Please do continue to work with your child's school on this - it is a new development and we are all learning as we go. There is no 'one size fits all' and so we have no expectation that the offer will look the same across the borough - although we do expect all schools to have a strong offer in place.

During this half term, a number of our schools have had visits from Ofsted and the Health and Safety Executive. The council has also carried out a number of visits, from our education services staff, public health colleagues and our health and safety teams. Sometimes this has been in response to issues raised by you as parents, others where a school has wanted to seek further advice. Without exception, reports from the visits have shown clearly that appropriate

measures are in place and have commented on the excellent environmental and learning arrangements that schools have adopted.

As I reflect on the last half term and the changes to our lives again following the significant rise in cases across the borough, I know that this continues to be a tough and worrying time for us all. All we can do is keep doing our best to try and bring the virus under control, each playing our part because this really will make a difference.

It is vital over the half term break that you and your children continue to adhere to the protective measures and restrictions that are in place. Solihull is currently a high risk area and cases continue to rise. This means that socialising indoors with friends or family from other households is currently not permitted and that the rule of six continues to apply outside the home. I cannot stress enough how important it is to ensure this continues over half term. We want schools to remain open and for pupils to be in them, receiving the education they need and deserve. By following the rules we will ensure that when pupils return after half term we can help to minimise spread.

If during the half term break your child tests positive for the virus, it is important that you notify your child's school through the systems they have put in place and take the appropriate measure to self-isolate. The same applies if they are contacted through NHS Track and Trace.

We must all remember 'Hands. Face. Space':

- **hands** – wash your hands regularly and for 20 seconds
- **face** – wear a face covering in indoor settings where social distancing may be difficult, and where you will come into contact with people you do not normally meet
- **space** – stay 2 metres apart from people you do not live with where possible, or 1 metre with extra precautions in place (such as wearing face coverings or increasing ventilation indoors)
- You must not meet socially with friends and family indoors in any setting unless you live with them or have formed a support bubble with them. This includes private homes, and any other indoor venues such as pubs and restaurants.
- A support bubble is where a household with one adult joins with another household. Households in that support bubble can still visit each other, stay overnight, and visit public places together.

I hope that you and your family have a well-deserved break over half term and we look forward to welcoming you back into our schools in November.

Yours sincerely



Louise Rees  
**Director of Children's Services and Skills**