

The Rt Hon Gavin Williamson MP  
Secretary of State for Education  
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**Emailed to:**

[Sec-OF-STATE-Diary.PS@education.gov.uk](mailto:Sec-OF-STATE-Diary.PS@education.gov.uk)

Dear Secretary of State

**Reopening of schools**

We are writing to you regarding the Government's planning for the next phase of the response to the coronavirus crisis following the Prime Minister's announcement that schools could reopen to some children in stages from 1st June.

Speaking to headteachers and unions during this pandemic, many are concerned about the impact of reopening the country's schools on the safety of their children and staff. This has been echoed by concerns from some parents and young people.

Today, we virtually held Hackney Council's Headteachers Forum to listen to headteachers' concerns. Following the Prime Minister's announcements on Sunday, many are now concerned that details were released to the public about schools reopening without giving school leaders or councils proper public health guidance on social distancing.

This guidance on health and safety is essential in order to operate a school safely and with the confidence of staff, parents and young people. It is in this context that we



support the National Education Union's tests and position that without it, schools should not prepare to reopen.

These five tests are:

1. Much lower numbers of coronavirus cases than the current levels
2. A national plan for social distancing and appropriate PPE
3. Comprehensive access to regular testing for children and staff
4. Whole school strategies and protocols where cases appear
5. Protection for the most vulnerable to continue to self-isolate

At the same time, schools will need clear messages about how to support children of families who continue to self-isolate because a member of their household is shielding, as well as children in year groups who do not return to school.

Should these children need to continue to stay at home or self-isolate with their families, home schooling support will be needed, especially for those who are living in cramped households.

Hackney Council is stepping in to provide support in the absence of national guidance and clarity from the Government. We have been meeting with headteachers and unions to provide advice and local public health guidance in the absence of national material. We have also been providing learning materials on top of support provided by schools.

However, local support should only supplement national guidance. Given the decision to reopen schools will be made at a national level, it is the responsibility of your department in collaboration with the Department for Health & Social Care and Public Health England to provide guidance on how children and teachers can be safe at school.

Ideally a plan would be co-produced by the Government, education sector, local authorities and the unions — building confidence in reopening not creating further uncertainty as is happening now.

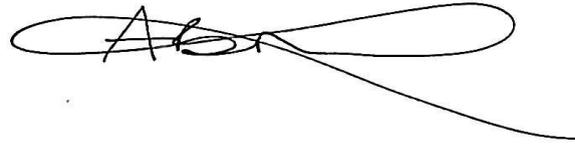
Following our previous letter to you on the 3rd April regarding free school meals, I also urge your department to offer clarity to schools and parents about how free school meal vouchers are to be issued as some children return to school and others are still at home including for families with no recourse to public funds. It is clear that even if schools do return in June, it will only be for a limited number of year groups and so this issue of holiday hunger over the summer remains.

We hope you will listen to our concerns and work with all of us who want schools to reopen, but only when it is clearly safe to do so.

Yours sincerely,



Philip Glanville  
**Mayor of Hackney**



Cllr Anntoinette Bramble  
**Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member  
for Education, Young People and  
Children's Social Care**

CC Kevin Courtney, Joint General Secretary, National Education Union  
Mary Bousted, Joint General Secretary, National Education Union  
Rebecca Long-Bailey, Shadow Secretary of State for Education  
Meg Hillier MP, Member of Parliament for Hackney South and Shoreditch  
Diane Abbott MP, Member of Parliament for Hackney North and Stoke  
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