

## **We will not be able to deliver education in August under current plans**

Dear Nicola,

I write to you in my capacity as Joint Leader of East Dunbartonshire Council and as a concerned parent. Our locality and community is rightly proud of its reputation as a great place to go to school. Our parents and pupils have a justifiable expectation that their council will deliver the education that they need and deserve. However since lockdown descended on us all I, as the Conservative Joint Leader of their Council, cannot deliver on their expectations. Quite simply we have been told to shut schools and now we are being told to reopen them on a part time basis from the 11 August, meaning at best our children will only return to school on a 2 day per week basis. This is not only unacceptable but unworkable, and I am calling on the Scottish Government and you, to urgently reconsider.

I understand that there are no easy choices for you First Minister but part-time education is not in the best interests of our pupils or our parents. Our communities and the economy have suffered enough. The infection rate is substantially down, the virus is under control and we need to be prepared to return our lives back to normal. If we don't return schools to full time learning then the long term impact of being out of school for our pupils is incalculable, particularly for those children from poorer households who rely on their local schools to provide them with opportunities that cannot be provided elsewhere.

It is easy to complain and then pass the blame, so I would like to offer you two possible solutions to break this impasse. Please seriously consider reducing the 2m social distancing rule to 1m from August onwards. This will allow our schools to get back to near normal and our pupils to return close to full time. If you cannot do that then you need to publish the scientific evidence to prove that your decision is justifiable. You then need to urgently increase the funding available to councils to deliver full time education from August onwards. That would allow us to increase our education workforce and our school estate to rise to this challenge.

Why is it we have seen the Scottish Exhibition Centre requisitioned for the NHS and a call to arms to retired nurses and doctors to come back to work, yet we are expected to deliver education with no such initiatives to allow us to increase our capacity? Many probationary teachers have correctly set out their concerns about not being given a permanent job from August onwards. They are right. At a time when we are looking at cutting educational delivery by 60% it seems baffling to see teachers willing and able to work being turned away.

First Minister you told Scotland after the 2016 election victory that we should judge your term on your record on education. If you are true to your word you will act now to lift the lockdown in schools and increase funding so my council can get on with our job and deliver the first class full time education that our pupils and parents deserve. Please First Minister, give us the funds we need to avert this educational disaster and do not fail this generation of young Scots.

Kindest Regards,

Andrew

Councillor Andrew Polson  
Joint Leader, East Dunbartonshire Council