

Supporting documentation / Email Chains for FOI 202000048525

FOI 1 Final Reply Deadline - 15/07/2020

I would like to request the following information under freedom of information legislation:

- Letters or emails from members of the public sent to the Cabinet Secretary for Education & Skills, John Swinney MSP, on the subject of the reopening of schools on 11 August 2020, and the proposed blended learning arrangements to be implemented following the reopening of schools.
- Letters or emails from members of the public sent to the First Minister, Nicola Sturgeon MSP, on the subject of the reopening of schools on 11 August 2020, and the proposed blended learning arrangements to be implemented following the reopening of schools.

I would like this information from 08 June 2020 to 17 June 2020.

[Redacted]

First Minister Correspondence

9 June – FM

From: [redacted]
Sent: 09 June 2020 23:44
To: First Minister <firstminister@gov.scot>
Subject: Children education has to become focus

Dear Nicola,

I want to hear more from you regarding our children's education and when our children will stop being the group who are suffering most in this pandemic and get them back to full time education.

We are currently facing the possibility that shops, restaurants, bars and cinemas are open before our children return to full time education. How on earth is it deemed acceptable that our children are in part time school whilst adults could go out for a drink?

The children are missing out from an academic, social and mental health perspective. I can see the summer holiday period is a convenient excuse for holding off from getting them back in phase 1 or phase 2, but I entirely disagree with having them return in August on a part time basis.

We know children are not at high risk of catching covid-19. It is one of the pieces of good news in all this. Yet they are still not at school. We have NHS paediatricians saying the same on bbc2 this evening. Teachers claim they are at risk, yet the risk of catching it in a classroom is no different than walking through a shopping centre in December.

As a full time working parent of two primary age children I can wholeheartedly assure you that children will not social distance during the summer holidays. They will be outside playing with their friends. How else will us parents work? We, the parents, now have enough medical advice to manage the risk and allow children to socialise again. Therefore the notion that we put them back to school part time, away from their friends they have spent the whole summer with, is absurd. There is no risk free option now. We need to now manage the risk.

Can you please put your number 1 focus on what is best for our children and that has to be getting them back to school full time on 11 August.

Adults can suffer longer restrictions. Please not the children.

And to conclude with the words of my [redacted] "I don't want my great-grandchildren to suffer any more to protect me and my generation, I've had my life, it was a great life, but the children have to now come first".

Please move your focus to the children and stop them from being the group who suffer the greatest.

Regards,
[redacted]

9 June 2020 – First Minister

Good Afternoon Mr Swinney & Ms Sturgeon

I was recently asked as a parent of a school aged child to complete a parental survey for education recovery by my local authority [redacted]

The final question on the survey asked:-

If you have any other suggestions about what might work well for a blended model of home and school learning from August, please use the comment box below to provide details (250 words max)

I had much more than 250 words so I was asked to send an email which would be passed on and included in the information being gathered.

I have attached a copy of what I sent as I believe we as parents need to be heard and our opinions taken into consideration as this affects our children's health, wellbeing and mental health.

You have the opportunity to make changes in the educational system and I think this has to be seriously considered before we decide to send our children back to school in August if they return.

Thank you for taking the time to read this email.

Kindest Regards
[redacted]

Parental Survey – Education Recovery in [redacted]

10. If you have any other suggestions about what might work well for a blended model of home and school learning from August, please provide details.

My child is currently in [redacted] and is due to move to [redacted] in August, if, and when the schools return. Our children have missed a full term of school. School term 2019-2020 they should have attended school for 188 days or 37 weeks 3 days, up till they are supposed to stop on Friday 26th June they will have missed 56 days or 11 weeks 1 day of school, which is nearly a third of their final primary school education.

This is one of the most important terms as they should have had transition days, leavers parties, last day year book presentations, learning their leavers song but most importantly mentally getting prepared to leave the school, teaching staff and classmates that they have know for the last 7 years. They have been in classes of between 20 and 30 children, and a school of between 200-350. You are now expecting them to move to a new school, where there could be anywhere between 800-1800 pupils. How much of a challenge is that when they have had no transition?

My [redacted] did require an enhanced transition as [redacted], does not have a [redacted] but this has never happened for [redacted] or other children requiring the same assistance.

Do the education department think that it is acceptable to do this to our children who were due to transition this year? I think this is going to cause some of our children to have serious health, wellbeing and mental health issues very soon due to the stress and anxiety this will bring.

I know this virus has been terrible and no-one is sure what is going to happen next, but as a parent I think this seriously needs to be re-looked at.

Why can they not look at extending the school term. Instead of schools transitioning in August, why can the school year not be extended to transition to new classes/schools in January then everyone moves up at the same time. This would give all the children a chance to catch up with what they have missed in nurseries, classes and schools that they left in March. What difference does it make if the school year runs from January to December instead of August to June as it is still split into 4 terms in the one school year? Maybe by this time there will be more scientific evidence collated and maybe closer to some sort of cure or prevention. This would make returning to a more normal school environment, plus they will have the chance to have 4 months in their class, nursery, school that they left with the blended model of learning that they are currently experiencing without the added stress of being in a different class or school with different teaching staff and pupils.

Another suggestion is re-sitting the year which I know is not ideal, but it is an option that should be considered.

You are asking our children to return in August where there will be a blended model of learning, split between learning in school and learning at home. This is not going to benefit our children at all. They will not be in a normal school environment as you will be restricted to how many children you can have in the school at any one time. Having blended education means that they are receiving diluted education and will not benefit from a full year's professional tuition. We as parents are dedicated and willing to help educate our children to the best of our abilities but fall far short of the capabilities of professional teaching staff. I feel our children will be deprived of the proper education received by all other students who have previously completed these years prior to the current situation.

We are very concerned about the staff and children being able to maintain social distancing. How can a teacher ensure children are adhering to this and, also be able to review their work personally as has happened with previous students, and offer assistance whilst maintaining 2m distancing? We are also very concerned about children maintaining distance whilst moving throughout the school, on breaks and using toilet facilities.

World Health Organisation are now advising that we should all wear face coverings when social distancing cannot be guaranteed. Will it be the intention of the Education Board to implement this as a rule, if so, will they be supplying face coverings for all staff and pupils if and when they return in August?

It has been announced today by the majority of English primary schools, they will not be able to reopen this term, which does not meet government targets. This shows that the government and educational boards are aspiring to get staff and pupils back to school too early without having the full resource and back up research confirmed to prove that it is safe and feasible to do so.

We do understand that it is very important to get children back into education especially those at risk, in a vulnerable situation and from disadvantage backgrounds to safeguard our children's future, however this can only be done when we know it is safe for both the children and the staff to do so.

10 June – FM

From: [redacted]

Sent: 10 June 2020 11:55

To: First Minister <firstminister@gov.scot>

Subject: School closures

Dear Ms Sturgeon

I am writing to you about the phased return to schools and the health and educational impact of social distancing on children. The effect on our young people of lockdown, school closure, and social distancing is gravely concerning.

Indeed, a recent paper “ Wider collateral damage to children in the UK because of the social distancing measures designed to reduce the impact of COVID-19 in adults” (Crawley et al) , the authors lay out the impact, stating“ It therefore seems likely that the decisions on social distancing contravene the UN convention of the child. “ .

Children must have the opportunity to return to school at the earliest opportunity. By September, many of our children will have been out of school for six months.

However, proposals for making return to school contingent on harmful and disproportionate social distancing measures are extremely concerning and will extend and compound the damage described in the BMJ editorial above.

I believe these measures to be disproportionate and harmful. We know that social isolation is a risk factor for poorer psychological and physical health outcomes and I believe these untested measures are likely to be highly detrimental to my child’s physical and mental wellbeing.

There is little evidence to suggest that social distancing between children has any effect on the epidemic spread. In Sweden, where schools have remained open throughout, such social distancing measures have not been imposed.

In summary:

- School closures are inconsistent with the rights of a child to an education.
- Decades of social research show social distancing measures do more harm than good to children’s well-being.
- The proposed measures for school openings will compound and extend the harm from the negative impact of closures. These measures are not proportionate to the low risk of the virus in children.
- These measures further deepen and entrench existing inequities in our society.

I urgently request that:

- You call upon the government to open schools for children at the earliest opportunity. It is deeply troubling that we are now hearing of school disruption continuing until

November and even into 2021. What possible justification can there be for this when children in other countries are returning to school?

- Given the significant damage that is being enacted upon children, I urge you to take a stand and place yourself on the right side of history by speaking out for our society's most vulnerable members.

10 June – FM

From: [redacted]
Sent: 10 June 2020 12:13
To: First Minister <firstminister@gov.scot>
Subject: School re opening

Good morning First Minister,

First and foremost I would like to say the biggest thank you from my family and I on how you have handled everything since this virus has hit us. You have kept us all up to date and have been so honest about everything. Keep up the amazing work!

Now onto what I am concerned about. I have [redacted]

I've been doing home schooling with them since the beginning of this but it's only been revision of what they had already learned. I spoke to the deputy head about me teaching them new things but we thought it best that I don't as I would teach them differently than a school teacher would and it would just confuse them when they go back to school. They will have missed out on 3 months of proper schooling by the time they get back to school in August and that concerns me greatly as [redacted] was already struggling in school, [redacted] is going into [redacted], which is obviously a really important year and [redacted] is going into [redacted], another important year.

Can we not start the new school year after the Christmas holidays? Have all children go back in August but still in their previous primaries/secondaries so they can finish off learning what they should have done before lockdown? Is this a viable option? I really hope so as I have no idea how they will catch up otherwise.

I know you probably get thousands of emails a day and I'm sorry to add an extra one onto them!! But I felt I had to say my bit as it really is something that I worry about every day.

Many many thanks for all that you do for our country, [redacted].

10 June – FM

From: [redacted]

Sent: 10 June 2020 19:15

To: First Minister <firstminister@gov.scot>

Subject: Returning to school

Hi.. First of all I would like to say that I've been really impressed by the way that you are looking after a Scotland during this current situation.

The only thing that still confuses me is pupils returning to school. Children have potentially missed out on months of their school year. So when they return hopefully in August they will go up to the next year. Why is there not the opportunity to change the start of the school year? Children return to school after the summer holidays to the same year they were in before lockdown, then the new academic year can start in January instead of August.

I'm sure this has possibly been considered but I've never heard anything about it.

I look forward to your response

[redacted]

10 June – FM

From: [redacted]

Sent: Wednesday, June 10, 2020 12:45:11 PM

To: Sturgeon N (Nicola), MSP <Nicola.Sturgeon.msp@parliament.scot>

Subject: Covid 19 - scholls, business and the future

Hello Ms Sturgeon

I hope that you are well.

I wanted to share with you my thoughts and experiences from the last few months and going forward.

Firstly my work position is that I own with my [redacted], a business that has been severely impacted by the current pandemic. Our staff are currently on 100% salary (furlough and a top up my ourselves) because we are human beings not right wing elitists as anyone owning a business today is being portrayed. My [redacted] and I have taken a severe drop in wages (basically just enough to cover our mortgage and some bills) and using savings for food etc. My [redacted] who can't work just now and has had lots of work [redacted] did have scheduled in, cancelled so there is no money coming in from [redacted]. This situation cannot go on for the long term we are running out of money.

[redacted] hosted a dinner during the NIKE conference and Public Health were in touch with us the following week and all staff at the event spoken to. I find it strange that NOT ONE member of our staff showed any systems of Covid19 when you are portraying the virus the way you are.

I have [redacted]. This is the same school that I attended. Before you dismiss me as some toff born with a silver spoon in her mouth I would like to explain my situation. My parents are from working class single parent families in [redacted]. Their families worked hard but money was always tight. The flat I was lived in when I was first born didn't have a front door or living room floor. Hard work, resilience, self belief and the teachers strikes in the 80's meant that my parents made the decision to send us to a private school. During the recession in the 90's we lost everything - I stayed with family friends, my [redacted] went into town and my [redacted] and [redacted] went to stay in [redacted]. [redacted] subsidized our school fees for our final years.

When I had my [redacted] and started looking at schools I realised how much the state schools were lacking, what has happened to sport, music and art? What has happened to discipline in our children? Our schooling system is a disgrace. My [redacted] and I decided to save in other areas and send [redacted]. In order for us to do this we have to make sacrifices in other areas.

The number of times in the last three months that I have wanted to jump off a bridge has been incredible. I sometimes feel it would be worth it just to highlight the issues that normal, real people are facing.

My [redacted] is about to have a nervous breakdown, he is a bubbly, sociable, sporty little [redacted] and that has all been taken away from him. With no siblings his own age to play with [redacted] is retreating further and further into himself.

My business has been obliterated and will take many years to re build. In the meantime there will have to be redundancies. I am not scared of hard work, I have watched my parents do this and pass these values onto myself and my siblings.

So what are we to do in August? How on earth are things going to work out. I do not expect schools to child mind my children but at the same time how can I work and rebuild my business and create employment for others and pay taxes if I cannot work full time? How is my [redacted] to cope mentally if [redacted] childhood is being robbed from [redacted] ?

The Key Workers classification is a joke, the schools have never closed for them, this is discrimination. I know lots of key workers who only work a couple of days but have their kids at school full time. Key workers that are working from home and sending their kids to school.

Look at the other counties in Europe, look at their schools? Why do we always have to be so "rubbish" at everything? Our schooling is a joke, our sport is a joke, our health is a joke? Do you want us to be this country, is this really what you want - Scotland the first country in the world where everyone works for the state or is on benefits. Is this your vision for Scotland? Why can we not aim higher, to be the best small country that we possibly can be, to bring back some bloody pride?

So what are parents in state schools now doing? Getting private tutors for their children on the days they are not in school. I can't afford to do this on top of the [redacted], so this means that the following will happen

1. Parents take their children out of private schools and put them into the already massively oversubscribed state schools. I am sure you don't need me to tell you that over 25% of children in (redacted) go to private schools. The state schools get 100% of the funding for say 75% of the children and the system is shit, imagine how much worse it will be as more pupils are put into the state system.

2. Parents in state schools who can afford it get private tutors leading to even more of a gap between rich and poor.

I love my country and everything that it has to offer but I am fed up of it being SHIT. Please get the children back to school full time in August. Make us the country that we should be rather than the disgrace that it is now. Any sensible person knows just how badly this whole thing has been run

1. the care homes should have always been a priority. Once in a care home you are not leaving. This people are high risk and unfortunately in a waiting room for death. I know, my beloved [redacted] died in one.

2. Test, test, test

3. Get the children back to school for their own mental health

From,

[redacted]

11 June – FM

From: [redacted]

Sent: Thursday, June 11, 2020 10:56:59 AM

To: Sturgeon N (Nicola), MSP <Nicola.Sturgeon.msp@parliament.scot>

Subject: Idea For Schools Going Back

Hi,

I'm an [redacted] student from [redacted] in [redacted] and I have an idea of how to have students in class safely following rules with social distancing.

So first you would split each year group in half and split the school in half. Half the school would be for pupils S1-S3 and the other half for S4-S6. On Monday and Tuesday one half of each year group would go into school and say one class had P.E 1st period, that one class would go into a P.E hall, social distancing. Their P.E teacher would teach them whatever they need to learn and then if they had English next period their English teacher would go into the same hall instead of all the pupils switching classes. This means less people are interacting with each other. On Wednesday all the cleaners and janitors would come in and give the school a big clean, get rid of all the germs. Then on Thursday and Friday the other pupils would come in and do the same thing. This allows us all to get some time in school and some time at home, the pupils will still have to complete work at home on the days they weren't at school. So that's my idea, let me know if you think it's a good one, have a good day.

[redacted]

11 June – FM

-----Original Message-----

From: [redacted]

Sent: 11 June 2020 19:51

To: First Minister <firstminister@gov.scot>

Subject: Children Return to schools and effect on parents

Good evening first minister.

I write this email to you to seek clarity and advice on the Scottish Governments plan for children to return to school in August part time.

If children are to return then teachers are to return, thus giving an issue to teachers who are parents and whose children attend different schools and will be in on different days.

My family falls into that bracket, my [redacted] who has just completed her probation and been accepted by council is a teacher in a [redacted] school (waiting on confirmation of next years position) and our children attend another [redacted] school. Children are [redacted]

I work in the [redacted] on a contract basis, I have been hit hard over last 3 months with no work and no support for my contract set up as LTD Company. I have been told I can return to work in mid July, something I will have to do in order to ensure we do not lose our home.

The current plans issued from both associated schools would have my [redacted] in school for 5 days and our children in school for 2 days each. The [redacted] school have emailed us to ensure that we have the tech in phase to home school during the home days. They have not asked if we can home school. We do have the tech but who will be here to look after our children and home school? My [redacted] will be teaching and I will be on site [redacted]. (If relaxation permits).

Is the assumption that we find people to look after our children or that we give up our jobs?

Only option we have for others is my [redacted] parents, both are [redacted] but in late 60s, 1 has [redacted] and we have been strict in ensuring she is protected from any exposure to COVID-19. If we use grandparents Is that not a contradiction on what the whole aim has been in shielding and limiting exposure?

Do I give up my job? I am already struggling in finance terms, giving up my job does not help the economy or my role to look after my family and provide for them. I would lose house by Sept.

The idea of reducing classes and putting kids into schools in a part time capacity Sounds like the idea of an unrealistic, childless, wealthy person who has no experience of real life and it's issues. It comes across as something that is being done so that something is being done. It is pointless however. If decision is that schools are to re open then part time will not reduce any risk. Once kids are out and about, any risk of children being an infection source is now live. It is better for all that they just all go back full time all together. This ties into my point about requiring

others to look after kids on off days. Grand parents who would not be exposed to children that been around others will now be exposed as parents have no choice.

There is word of certain children being able to go to hubs, again how do parents manage this? 1 kid to school, 2 kid to hub in another school, parent to get to work in another place for an earlier time!!! It does not work.

If you have clarity please advise of what the plan is and how Scot Gov Expect parents to manage.

The schools themselves do not know and cannot provide an answer, my reply to them would be not to publish anything then until they do know.

Thank you and regards
[redacted]

Sent from my iPhone

11 June – FM

From: [redacted]

Sent: 11 June 2020 20:07

To: First Minister <firstminister@gov.scot>

Subject: Schools return

First Minister,

It is over 3 weeks since you announced a "blended return" for schools on 11th August; is there a roadmap for each of the local authorities?

I see/hear nothing about any plans to

a/ use empty buildings such as church halls, town halls, school gyms and assembly halls; there are plenty of permanently unused buildings too

b/ double shift schools

c/ add temporary buildings to school sites

d/ request retired teachers and final year students to supplement the workforce

e/ amend timetables to minimise pupil movements e.g. extended periods for subjects requiring specialist equipment e.g. 2 weeks timetable of chemistry in 1 sitting

f/ reduce social distancing in schools to 1 metre

It is most worrying that by 11 August, you don't seem to be factoring in an environment where we are in Phase 4

Again, I am baffled as to why a return to school has caught everyone by surprise and that we are not already visibly executing to a pre-existing plan. We seem to have become a nation of can't-doers

I write as I can see the pressure on the children; I see the need to get businesses back running (no point opening shops if no-one can staff them!).

Platitudes are not enough: we need to see action. And an action plan that addresses how kids are to catch-up - not even more lost opportunity because of a "bended model"

Sincerely,
[redacted]

11 June – FM

From: [redacted]

Sent: 11 June 2020 19:46

To: First Minister <firstminister@gov.scot>

Subject:

Dear Ms Sturgeon

I am writing to you with great concern regarding the effect on Scottish Education due to Covid-19.

I understand that school closure was inevitable to protect our children, however, this is having a major impact on the educational progress of students. Many teachers have worked tirelessly to support parent/carers in home schooling their children, nevertheless, this has proved difficult in these times.

- Many parents/carers struggle to keep up with educating their children at home and due to isolation have no outside support from friends and family.
- Many parents/carers and their children are suffering from anxiety from the unknown outcomes of the pandemic, this making it difficult for home schooling to be a success.
- The learning environment which children are expected to learn in these circumstances are extremely different to the norm and may not be the most positive and supporting, therefore having a major impact on children's learning and progress.
- Parents working from home while school is closed to non-keyworker children is difficult to manage and does not allow children the time and support they deserve and need.
- Resources can prove difficult for home schooling with not all families having up to date skills, Internet technology or the appropriate equipment for children to learn and receive support.
- Home schooling is having a negative impact on closing the attainment gap between the most and least deprived areas.

The list of the effects home-schooling is having on our children's education is endless. As children have missed approx. one third of their school year, has it been considered for children to return to school and complete or restart the school year allowing ALL children an equal opportunity in their education? As it is looking like children are going back to school in August on a part-time basis could this not be used to fill the gaps in the education that children have missed out on?

As school is seen to be a positive, safe, nurturing environment for children to learn, is returning to school keeping to social distance measures offering this to our children? Has the health and well-being of our children been considered?

Children in Scotland already start school from a very young age, would allowing child to repeat their school year, allowing children time to catch up on what they have missed out on not be seen to have a more positive effect on children's confidence, health and well-being and overall education than children playing catch up from now until the end of their school education?

I appreciate this will have an impact on children across all stages of schooling from early years through to senior level. However, children at early years level and attending nursery on a part time basis timetable would have less of an impact on the education of school age children. Having already missed one third of their current school year and returning to school on a part-time basis of two days per week for the foreseeable is going to have a detrimental effect on our children's education and future opportunities.

I look forward to your reply.

Kind Regards
[redacted]

11 June – FM

From: [redacted]
Sent: 11 June 2020 09:06
To: First Minister <firstminister@gov.scot>
Subject: Re: School opening

On Wed, 10 Jun 2020 at 22:49, [redacted] wrote:

To the Right Honourable First Minister Nicola Sturgeon,
I have copied my local MSP in as well. I live at [redacted].
I am really concerned about my child's education, the schools are doing there best and I understand the seriousness of the situation, I work at [redacted] I am [redacted] therefore I was sent to [redacted] when lockdown first happened unfortunately it was a bit of a disaster and although testing negative for covid 19 as I am sure you are both aware the virus can be in the lung cavity and therefore when testing the back of nose/throat area it comes up negative I've seen from a few sources about 25% are false negatives although I suspect greatly it could be much higher if people aren't retested or have it in the lungs primarily and not in the throat or nose, I am [redacted] for that but i digress I was just wanting you to know I understand the seriousness of this as when I had it and I'm pretty certain I had it as I [redacted] when I was doing the breathing technique set out by Dr Ranj on tv, I'm still having issues [redacted] I thought staying at home was better, I've been [redacted]. It followed me from one place to the next. I can't break confidentiality about ppl I saw at the hospital with it but I can say [redacted] who is [redacted], I also have heard of others testing positive for the virus without having any symptoms. I have heard children are less susceptible to the virus and there have been reports that children are unlikely to spread it to each other however this is obviously a new virus that scientists know very little about, my worry is schools will have been closed for three months by the time summer holidays start, both my [redacted] are front line workers, I adapted my working hours so I could pick up and drop off my child at school, I changed where I worked so I could pick [redacted] up and drop [redacted] off at school, during the summer holidays I take a couple of weeks off to cover looking after [redacted] and [redacted] watch [redacted] the days where both [redacted] and I are working early shift or if I'm early and [redacted] late as there is overlap.
In August I've heard that the plans are to have the children in only two days a week and to deep clean the school on a Wednesday and at the weekend.
I have several issues with this proposal. My first issue is with the lack of education my child is getting, I am not a teacher, I don't know how to teach let alone teach my [redacted] who has [redacted]. [redacted] has a [redacted] but [redacted] isn't able to get the support [redacted] really needs [redacted] needs the one to one support with maths from someone who understands how to teach it, if I wanted to be a teacher I would have done my degree in that. I would like to know how us as parents are supposed to be looking after our children when we have jobs to go to, especially as grandparents aren't supposed to be inside our homes and if we use childminders we would be just as safe sending our children to school as the whole reason we are to self isolate is to stop the disease from spreading which we are far too late in doing now anyway, as if only one child who has the virus goes to school and is asymptomatic then everything that is touched is contaminated and it stays in the air for 15 minutes so everyone breathing that air can also catch it, however the spread amongst children from all the reports that come out is really low, to tell me the school is going to be deep cleaned twice

a week is utterly astonishing, firstly I'd like to know where the money is coming from for this? Secondly I'd like to know where the man power is coming from too as it's a massive job? As the virus can stay on surfaces for a number of days that means cleaning all surfaces with a antiviral wipes such as the ones we use in hospitals, there is a lot of stuff in schools to clean, and I've not even started on how are you ensuring the carpets are clean? So every room on a Wednesday is going to be gone through and cleaned? I don't believe you, I don't really care about that anyway I understand that your trying to reassure parents who are worried but I suspect if they actually thought about how the virus is spread it wouldn't work as the moment ppl come into contact with someone who has it they can catch it and it doesn't matter how clean the environment is around you. I think children's lives are being put at risk by not fully opening schools in August, I have been able to use the hub and no one has said if that's still going to be the case in August, I am lucky in which worse case scenario my [redacted] will come over and watch [redacted], however what about the parents who just don't care who abuse their children? They are at home now, suffering, possibly starving, the last I heard it was one in three children in Scotland live in poverty! That figure is disgraceful and lockdown is making it worse, jobs are being lost abusers are staying at home more, it's the vulnerable that are suffering and I'm terrified to discover the state we are actually in, I work in a [redacted] and at the beginning of lockdown our ward was really low on patients, do I think people stop [redacted] because of lockdown, no I think people were frightened to come to hospital and have possibly died or caused more damage to themselves as they haven't come in, it has started to get busier again now, but it did reaffirm my belief when my [redacted] who is in the police was fitted for a face mask last week (better late than never) that there will probably be a lot of deaths that no one has noticed yet as there has been lockdown. I don't want to just be negative and say we need to lift this lockdown but I think what needs to happen is children going back to school, to assist with this why don't we give every child an antibody test, it's 100% accurate, it will alleviate fears, it will also give a bit of a sample of the population as usually if a child has had it so have the parents, it will save money on deep cleaning twice a week and there won't have to be staggered start and end times for schools, that is if the government is actually able to do that considering so far you have been unable to face fit the majority of nhs staff and also are not regularly testing with a test that at best is 75% accurate, is someone told you contraceptive was 75% would you risk it? How many children are being left alone, if we get all the college and university labs working on the testing results surely by the time schools start back in August the majority of school children will have had the antibody testing done, set up clinics at the school, one class each day to come in and get blood taken via the finger prick test, it's then around 48hours according to the private companies to get it back, I'm sure the universities and college labs can get it done quicker, instead of wasting money on these other things do that instead and let's get Scotland back to some level of normalcy

Thanks

[redacted]

Sent from my iPhone

14 June 2020 – First Minister

Dear Ms Sturgeon

Let me begin by saying that throughout Covid I have felt very lucky to be in Scotland. I appreciate the tone and honesty of your daily briefings and your humility and kindness has shown throughout.

I am, however, deeply concerned about the distance learning education model.

[This article published in the British Medical Journal](#) includes many of the studies that have been done around the world concerning children and is very encouraging.

Please consider the extensive mental health repercussions of a distance learning education model.

For working families, distance learning is a disaster. Those of us in two-parent working families are already hanging by a thread, and Friday's announcement has us fearing for our jobs. Working and homeschooling at the same time is impossible, and asking Scottish parents to homeschool for what may be an entire school year is unfair and unsustainable. I cannot imagine how single parents will manage.

A recurring answer from MSPs is "employers will have to be flexible." This is naive; employers will certainly not be flexible; they'll find someone else for the job, particularly in the private sector. Women will most likely be impacted; indeed four good friends have quit their jobs in the past few weeks because of being unable to fit work around homeschooling needs: [redacted].

This leads to my next point: the repercussions will be damaging for the NHS as well. My [redacted] is a [redacted], as are many in our social circle, and countless discussions have been flying around this weekend about how medics will have to cut their shifts to help cover childcare with the other, non-medic parent (as we are not eligible for "hub" childcare). This will be a common response that will result in a high percentage of medics working fewer hours and thus contributing to longer wait times. This is obviously not ideal as we come out of lockdown.

Please leave things open to cancel this model altogether if things continue to get better for [redacted] and Scotland re: Covid. This virus has already obliterated the mental health of so many of us. Our kids are missing their friends and teachers. Parents are stressed about losing their jobs and being expected to become teachers, potentially for many months. Medics are calling the mental health fallout the "real second wave", and you have the opportunity to help make this easier for children and parents in Scotland.

Thank you for your time.

Regards

[redacted]

14 June 2020 – First Minister

Dear First Minister and Deputy First Minister

Further to the email from the Head Teacher of [redacted] on Friday, regarding the current arrangements for the proposed return to school, I am writing to express my concern. I am sure this is a hugely difficult time for all teachers and I appreciate all that has been done to keep a sense of community going for the children of [redacted] as well as the focus on ongoing academic learning. The past three months have been difficult for teachers, parents and children.

I have read with increasing alarm the plans for the arrangements for next term, however. What is being proposed, no doubt fits with the current social distancing recommendations, but is completely unsustainable and hugely damaging to children and society as a whole if it goes on for any length of time.

I am aware of the real space issue that our school has already, and imagine this is the case for many Scottish schools. It was always going to be impossible to teach in a meaningful way in a socially distanced manner. I do not believe in the school environment we should pretend that this is possible.

As we learn more about Covid on an ongoing basis, as well as learning from what other countries are doing, it seems to me that the Council and the Scottish Government have chosen to take a position which is not comprehensive or nuanced, instead maintaining the mantra of staying at home to save lives. Whilst this is an easy slogan to remember, the approach does not take into account the wider damage being done to the community in the long run. Of course everyone wants to minimise the risk of contracting and passing on this disease, and we have incorporated risk mitigation actions into our daily lives now in order to do this, but the current science shows that children thankfully do not appear to be the primary spreaders of the disease and the virus appears to be declining in the wider population. We are not in the same position as we were in March, or indeed February when it appears to have been circulating widely.

I am not a scientist. I rely on the scientists giving advice, but scientific advice and opinion is not homogenous, and cannot be the only voice in this discussion. All children, not just those from disadvantaged backgrounds, will be hugely damaged if the current policy is implemented particularly, as we have been lead to believe in the media today, it is the plan for the next twelve months. School is not just about learning but also social interaction. The proposal being put forward at the moment gives neither at the level which our children deserve. My children miss and long for school, their friends, the rituals and the input of their teachers.

For working parents, many of whom are likely to face redundancy and real financial upheaval over the next twelve months, this is going to be put an even greater strain on already stretched nerves, as we all try to do our best in every aspect of our lives. This will have an impact on children too. I cannot see how those who continue to have jobs, can properly supervise and develop their children whilst trying to meaningfully work. It is not possible to do either well over a prolonged period of time. Something will have to give.

I also understand that Teachers should be protected. I would have no issue with Teachers wearing PPE, if that was wanted or seen as helpful. The children wouldn't either, I'm sure, as they have grown use to the sight of friends and key workers such as supermarket employees, in full visors and masks.

I would ask that you please ensure that these points are put across in your discussions and that an overall risk based approach is taken, which is kept under constant review and bears in mind that perhaps this crude, one dimensional approach may save some lives, it will also be at a huge cost to society and our children which will sadly indirectly cost lives also. These are very difficult issues and decisions which require careful and comprehensive thinking, which is updated as we learn more about the virus and the situation but they cannot be taken in isolation. There is an opportunity cost in every course of action.

Regards
[redacted]

14 June – FM

From: [redacted]

Sent: 14 June 2020 21:02

To: First Minister <firstminister@gov.scot>

Subject: [redacted] Schools Academic Year 20/21

Dear Ms Sturgeon

I'm writing because I'm becoming increasingly alarmed about the impact of reduced face to face contact time students will have with teachers in the coming academic year. I know that we are awaiting final details but the speculation about what the upcoming academic year might look like in terms of pupil/teacher contact is very very worrying. In the main I'm concerned what education is going to look like for those taking Highers who have not had the experience of sitting Nat 5 exams and will have reduced contact time to prepare for hugely important assessments. No amount of support for independent study can compensate for interaction in the classroom. I have concerns too about those who are generally disengaged with learning and find this new learning style impossible without a great deal of support. As a family we are willing and happy to engage with our [redacted] learning. It's not easy but we are able to do so and have more flexibility than some in our employment to be supportive. But it's simply not enough and I am fearful of the longer term consequences for this cohort of students. I focus on [redacted] and [redacted] because that is where our children sit and others will have different and equally valid concerns around other stages of schooling. The losses are significant - limited social contact, very little peer support and feedback, reduced participation in sport, music, no work experience, inevitable widening of an attainment gap ... the list goes on. Of course there is risk in a return to face to face schooling. There's a risk in everything. But the risk for children (and teachers and other staff) who are well is low. However the measures being implemented in the name of preventing harm seem so risk averse that the long term implications, in my view, are in danger of doing a great disservice to our children, cause them to experience unnecessary losses and distress and will have a detrimental impact now and for years to come.

I hope that you will support a case for the current decisions being made for next academic year and schooling to be reviewed as a matter of urgency. I'd like to see children engaged in full time education, face to face with their teachers, from August 2020. There is no reason to delay.

Best wishes

[redacted]

[redacted]

14 June – FM

From: [redacted]

Sent: Sunday, June 14, 2020 5:47:54 PM

To: Sturgeon N (Nicola), MSP <Nicola.Sturgeon.msp@parliament.scot>; enquiries@eis.org <enquiries@eis.org> [redacted] Swinney J (John), MSP <John.Swinney.msp@parliament.scot>; Shona.Robinson.msp@parliament.scot <shona.robinson.msp@parliament.scot>; Hamilton R (Rachael), MSP <Rachael.Hamilton.msp@parliament.scot>

Subject: Education

Dear First Minister, Mr. Swinney, Ms Robson, Ms Hamilton, [redacted], EIS Scotland

I am writing to express my profound disquiet at the seeming lack of co-operation and planning for the education of our future generation.

Obviously the Covid 19 pandemic has caused untold heartache, disruption and financial cost across all sections of society. However everyone seemed to pull together to support the NHS so I do not see why education has not been treated with the same degree of urgency.

It is time that **all political squabbles between parties, unions and councils are put aside and very urgent action is taken to minimise long term damage to our childrens' education and mental welfare.** Nurses, other health careworkers and essential service workers have put their lives on the line and I am sure most teachers would do the same. If risk assessments were not carried out shortly after the start of the pandemic, why not?

My [redacted] are in the [redacted] area with [redacted] with no preparatory visits, the first parental information evening was cancelled and the second one arranged could not take place because of Covid. The [redacted] is, understandably extremely anxious and stressed. In addition the lack of contact between teachers and pupils has been minimal to say the least.

Please could everyone use their influence to ensure remedial action is taken without further delay.

Yours sincerely,

[redacted]

14 June – FM

From: [redacted]

Sent: Sunday, June 14, 2020 4:59:27 PM

To: Swinney J (John), MSP <John.Swinney.msp@parliament.scot>; Alister Jack <alister.jack.mp@parliament.uk>; Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills <DFMCSE@gov.scot>; Firstminster@gov.scot <Firstminster@gov.scot>; mcconnellj@parliament.uk <mcconnellj@parliament.uk>

Subject: Blended Education

Good afternoon,

As parents, we wish to express our concern at the impact that current plans will have on the welfare and education of the children of Scotland.

The current position in Scotland, with primary schools being closed from March until August, is already having a huge mental, social, emotional and educational impact on our children. From an educational perspective, it is well recognised by educators that a child's educational attainment is worse after the summer holidays than before, and the 5 month break, for many children, will result in educational disadvantages that may never be rectified. Our youngest school attenders, due to start P1 in August 2020 will miss out on a key time for interpersonal skills, language and literacy development, which is very disappointing, and something from which they may never fully recover. The government's own 'strategic framework for reopening schools' recognises that temporary school closures have been shown to negatively influence a child's educational achievement, both short and long term.

In addition to the educational difficulties, the impact on the welfare of the children across our region cannot be underestimated. For many children, school is their "safe place". This has been removed, with no hope of return for many months and even then on a very part-time basis. Countless children living in deprivation get themselves up and out to school because it is a warm building, with the promise of a warm meal, from someone who might be kind to them and notice them for a while. Many children will find the proposed return lacking in routine and consistency. Concerns about the extended impact of Covid-19, such as children being exposed to alcoholism and domestic abuse, have already been raised. Some of these children are not known to services and may not easily be identified as priority cases.

The coronavirus pandemic has been, and remains, very difficult for all aspects of society. For children in particular, who are unlikely to understand the rationale behind the current restrictions, their life has simply been shrunk. Home schooling is not equal for all, due to both parental work commitments and deprivation. The provision offered for home schooling by schools and teachers to children has varied greatly. We have no reason to believe that this level of inequality and disparity in home-school support would be rectified under the current proposals.

The WHO has said the best place for children is in school. Paediatric departments across Scotland have seen tiny numbers of COVID positive cases and no mortality has occurred in the under 15 years age group in Scotland. The Public Health England report last week confirmed that children are not significantly affected by Covid-19. The RCPCH's summary of the evidence available worldwide on covid-19 in children (updated weekly) suggests that, as far as we can know from the limited evidence currently available, children are both

unlikely to become seriously unwell with covid-19 and unlikely to spread the condition even if carrying it. The government's 'strategic framework for reopening schools' also recognises the weakness of the evidence in support of schools remaining closed and states that a minority of the Chief Medical Officer's Advisory Group felt that "once the timing was appropriate to enable opening of schools in any form, physical distancing in classrooms may not be a necessary measure and that fully re-opening schools should be considered." We would like to express our support for this view and our desire for all children to be fully educated and not further disadvantaged by this pandemic.

Locally, independent schools have indicated that they will be resuming schooling, in school, full time. Their smaller class sizes and larger facilities enable this. Our state educated children will be the victims of significant social and educational inequality under the current proposals.

Given that the Scottish schools do not return for two months and the early hopeful signs of falling rates of covid-19, why is the first position not for all schools to assume they will fully re-open as normal in August? This should surely be our first option, with preparations simultaneously made for a back-up plan of maximal schooling as safely as possible, should a second wave of covid-19 hit. In the event that there is a second wave and full re-opening is not possible, plans could be put in place now to create temporary classrooms in local community or commercial spaces. Could retired teachers or teaching assistants be called upon to help, in the same way that retired NHS workers have been asked to return? Given that the NHS was able to create and staff temporary hospitals in a few weeks, one wonders why the same cannot be done to ensure that education can be offered on a full time basis for all of our children. It is difficult to see how parents will be able to return to work, without normal schooling and childcare in place.

We understand the concerns of both teachers and parents about returning to the classroom and the need to comply with social distancing measures. However, many children and staff have been in keyworker school and nursery hubs throughout this pandemic. The teaching and nursery staff who have facilitated this deserve recognition and thanks. They also provide a potentially valuable resource in exploring how covid-19 has impacted those children and staff already in close proximity to one another. Anecdotally, local hubs report not using PPE or enforcing social distancing amongst children, and yet low rates of covid-19 amongst staff and pupils. Research to confirm or refute this could easily be undertaken in the hubs currently running, to provide a guide as to what we can expect when schools go back?

We ask you to act on behalf of all of our children, a vulnerable group who do not easily have a voice of their own. The long-term impact of continued school closures will have immeasurable effects on the social, emotional and educational welfare of all our children and potentially wider reaching consequences. School is not and never was, just about education. Let us use that knowledge to drive some sensible decision-making. There are risks in respect of Covid-19. However there are also very real, current risks in moving forwards with what is currently proposed in regard to schooling. We would be remiss as parents if we did not raise these concerns.

We urge you to aim for the full re-opening of schools and full-time education of all children in Scotland from August, if the current covid-19 case numbers continue to fall. The aim of lockdown was to prevent the NHS being overwhelmed and this has been achieved. We must now consider how to minimise the negative impact of this situation for all of our children.

My [redacted] is [redacted] and [redacted] was that concerned and worried on the impact on [redacted] education [redacted] actually emailed both the first minister and the education minister and then told me [redacted] had done it. I'm proud that [redacted] wanted to stand up for [redacted] rights and try to get [redacted] voice heard.

Yours sincerely,

[redacted]

14 June 2020 - FM

From: [redacted]
Sent: 14 June 2020 11:04
To: First Minister <firstminister@gov.scot>
Subject: Children

Dear Ms Sturgeon,

I am a [redacted] of two [redacted] aged [redacted] and [redacted]. We received notification yesterday from their [redacted] school that after the summer holidays they will only be attending school two days instead of five.

I cannot understand why this is considered necessary. Children have not been impacted by this virus, there have been no deaths in Scotland and very few in England. A recent article by the Telegraph confirmed that children are more likely to be hit by lightning than die from the Coronavirus. I'm therefore asking you First Minister, why are you limiting their time in school to only two days after months of no school when the risk to them is so small?

You have kept them from their friends for months, you have limited their social interaction and affected their education greatly. This notion of home schooling or blended learning is completely nonsensical. Children are not being taught. There has been no interactive learning. No provisions for virtual teaching. Children have been at home for almost three months and yet the Government and the local authority have not been able to ensure there's interactive teaching, why? Other education establishments and companies have been using tools such as Zoom, why has there been nothing rolled out for children? They are our future. You have spent £47 million on a hospital that is sitting idle. What has been spent on education in this crisis?

Your education minister on the Nine news programme this week was asked the question on what has been done in the last three months and he replied rolling out iPads. What use is an iPad to a child when the schools are not using it for virtual teaching? It allows teachers to assign tasks to children but there is no teaching, there is no understanding on the method to use. Children upload work and get back likes as if it's a picture on social media. I have been watching you tube videos to remind myself how to calculate long division then teaching this to my child so [redacted] can complete the tasks [redacted] has been assigned.

Are all children fortunate enough that their parents will be taking the time and effort to do this when you consider children in homes that are regarded as disadvantaged? How much further are they being left behind?

We have been incredibly fortunate that due to my [redacted] key worker status our [redacted] have attended their local school two days per week. The [redacted] love it and this is what saddens me most about what is being planned. What they are currently experiencing is not school they only have a couple of friends each on the days they attend and at times not any, but they go so happily and get so much from it.

Children thrive at school, they play sports they learn and have so many interactions. I just read the BBC article covering the open letter published in The Sunday Times today about the impact to children's mental health and risk of suicide and I wept. I plead with you to read the

article and reconsider what you are planning. Let children go back to school, put them and their education first. They are being left behind in this pandemic.

Please also consider the sports clubs that children attend. My [redacted] trained outdoors with his local football club twice a week and then played a competitive match at the weekend. [redacted] also trained with [redacted] school team and then played matches. [redacted] has none of that now. I spoke to the owner of [redacted] club yesterday and they have no understanding of when they can resume training or coaching sessions. Sport is so important to children. I worry so much for my [redacted] and how much [redacted] life is being impacted. Please address why sports clubs that train outside with children are being left behind in your proposals. If schools can return in August surely they can too even if competitive matches can not.

Kind regards,

[redacted]

14 June – FM

From: [redacted]
Sent: 14 June 2020 08:39
To: First Minister <firstminister@gov.scot>
Subject: FAO Nicola Sturgeon - Primary Schools

Dear Nicola

Hopefully this email reaches you.

As a [redacted]mother of a [redacted] the last 3.5 months of lockdown have been a particular struggle. Trying to work full time as a project manager, home school my [redacted] and parent has been an impossible task.

I now notice huge changes in my [redacted]behaviour, once a happy go lucky [redacted] year old [redacted]has become moody and withdrawn having had no interaction with children [redacted]own age for months! [redacted]shows no interest in home schooling which makes it impossible for me as a parent. I now fear [redacted]has fallen so far behind [redacted]peers that [redacted]will have to repeat [redacted] although I fear this will not be allowed. My[redacted] had been coming out with comments and thoughts that no parent should ever hear from their [redacted] and this is seriously affecting [redacted] mental health.

There has to be other options available for people in my situation. You cannot expect parents to work full time and home school and parent their children over the long term it is impossible! The blended school model will not work for people in my situation! There are other venues within [redacted] that could be utilised for schooling or childcare purposes. I am now faced with huge childminding costs as schools are only returning two days a week! I don't understand it as the chances of coronavirus spreading and seriously affecting young children is minuscule and instead we as a country are happy to let our children's mental health and education suffer! It is beyond belief and something more needs to be done.

Please can you give people like myself some consideration, only allowing kids back to school 2 days a week is not good enough, expecting [redacted] parents to work all the hours god sends to pay for additional childcare with no support from the government is quite frankly disgusting. My main concern here is my [redacted]and my own mental health and more needs to be done.

Regards
[redacted]

15 June – FM

From: [redacted]

Sent: 14 June 2020 19:23

To: First Minister <firstminister@gov.scot>

Cc: Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills <DFMCSE@gov.scot>

Subject: PLEASE REOPEN THE SCHOOLS NOW TO FULL & NORMAL SERVICE

Dear First Minister & Education Secretary

Please reopen the government-run primary and secondary schools in Scotland now. Half-hearted remote learning is NOT working. The shortfall in learning can NOT meaningfully be made up later. This is life-long damage at a sensitive age for young people.

Abandon social distancing in schools. But insist on smart behavioural hygiene practices around hand washing, sneezing, coughing etc. There have been NO fatalities from Covid in the under 15 age group in Scotland.

The proposed 50% remote learning and 50% 'real' schooling from August is a cop out. It's a triumph of safetyism over common sense and scientific evidence.

My kids' education — like hundreds of thousands of other kids in Scotland — is being massively and negatively impacted.

Even in normal times teachers notice a major deterioration in knowledge retention after a six-week summer holiday.

****IMAGINE WHAT THAT WILL BE LIKE AFTER SIX MONTHS!**

I beseech you First Minister & Education Secretary, please open the schools to FULL AND NORMAL SERVICE NOW.

Yours truly

[redacted]

15 June 2020 - FM

From: [redacted]

Sent: Monday, June 15, 2020 5:48:11 PM

To: Sturgeon N (Nicola), MSP <Nicola.Sturgeon.msp@parliament.scot>

Subject: 2021 SQA exams

Good afternoon,

As a [redacted] I tell my students that they can become involved in politics even if it is just sending a message to an MSP. So here I am, taking my own advice.

I have just read the article detailed below

<https://news.stv.tv/politics/sturgeon-blended-learning-will-not-last-whole-school-year?top>

Whilst I too do not wish to see "blended learning" go on for any longer than it has to, I have some grave concerns about the exams for next year going ahead. Teaching for the new course starts when the new timetables do so most Senior School students will have lost almost 4 weeks of course time already. Add to this the problems of "blended learning" and, in my opinion, we will be lucky to get through even two thirds of the Higher course in time for exams next year.

Engagement is shocking even amongst senior students so the expectation that a large amount of the course work will be done at home is impractical to laughable.

The SQA needs to have an announcement for schools before we go back in August so that we know what we are going to *try* to teach these courses.

There, I have participated in the political process.

Thank you for your time.

[redacted]

16 June – FM

-----Original Message-----

From: [redacted]

Sent: 16 June 2020 14:20

To: Sturgeon N (Nicola), MSP <Nicola.Sturgeon.msp@parliament.scot>; Gray I (Iain), MSP <Iain.Gray.msp@parliament.scot>; Swinney J (John), MSP <John.Swinney.msp@parliament.scot>; Halcro Johnston J (Jamie), MSP <Jamie.HalcroJohnston.msp@parliament.scot>; Wishart B (Beatrice), MSP <Beatrice.Wishart.MSP@Parliament.scot>; Leonard R (Richard), MSP <Richard.Leonard.msp@parliament.scot>; Carlaw J (Jackson), MSP <Jackson.Carlaw.msp@parliament.scot>; Greer R (Ross), MSP <Ross.Greer.msp@parliament.scot>

Subject: Getting Children Back to School

Dear Nicola & All

Our children must go back to school full-time in August - it is a challenge, but it can be achieved if there's a genuine will to do it. You must all work together and just for once see if you can't leave party political point scoring out of it.

I have attached a proposal which I request you kindly take a few minutes to read and consider. It's not long so you'll easily be able to read through it before the kettle boils.

Please think of our children who have no useful home support, children who live in impoverished areas, in impoverished and very challenging home environments. Children from these backgrounds are every bit as intelligent as children who are lucky enough to have many resources at their disposal. They should have someone in their corner - please let that be you.

Get our children back to school full-time from August - JUST MAKE IT HAPPEN.

Kind regards

[redacted]

15 June 2020 – First Minister

Good evening First Minister,

I am a [redacted] based in [redacted]. I would like to thank you for all of the hard work you are doing and the difficult decisions you are having to make. It cannot be easy!

Please can we have less contradiction of statements between you and your Deputy?! He has made a number of statements regarding lockdown and education in the last couple of weeks, where you have followed up the next day with a denial and u-turn.

The teaching profession are looking to you for leadership in a time of uncertainty, and mixed messages confuse everyone! I am desperate to get back into class, quite aware of the risks, but appreciate that many of my colleagues are much more apprehensive. Clear, agreed plans are what we need.

Many thanks,
[redacted]

15 June 2020 – First Minister

Dear First Minister,

I write to you following receipt of correspondence on Friday (12.06.2020) afternoon from our local authority ([redacted]) regarding the Scottish Government's planned approach to reopening schools in August.

Like so many across the country and the world, we – as an 'ordinary' family of two hard working parents and [redacted] school aged children – have faced the last 3 months of lockdown with bravery and determination to follow all of your guidance to protect our valuable NHS and keep our communities safe.

This has involved considerable sacrifice on many levels but the purpose of this letter is not to reiterate what I am sure you have heard from all corners of our country but rather to respond to the local authority level detail of your 'Blended Learning' approach which has, quite honestly been met with utter incomprehension by every single family with school aged children I know.

We were informed of the plans for our children's school to have an estimated '*33% capacity of [our] school's roll*' across 4 days of the school week, meaning that both my children will have – on average **-1.5 days per week in attendance at school – for the foreseeable future**. This presents an impossible challenge to working parents which will have a potentially devastating effect on the country's economic recovery.

In the last 24 hours alone, I have heard from 3 of my own friends who will be forced to resign from jobs they love (one a [redacted] and another a [redacted]) and which they have been hanging on to by their fingertips throughout lockdown as they simply cannot see a way to remain in employment over the coming year with their children away from school for such extended periods of time.

I, myself, as a [redacted] (and [redacted]) am perilously close to closing my own business in order to meet the basic needs of my young children at home.

I have close friends who are key workers with children in secondary education who, although they have had access to the key worker 'hubs' have had to find time at the end of punishing shifts in the front line to ensure that their children receive basic home learning support for their studies at such a vital time in their education.

My [redacted] is a [redacted] with an [redacted] who has dedicated the last 12 years of [redacted]. [redacted] has seen first-hand how education can so often play a vital role in their route to recovery. How many more young people must risk developing life threatening conditions such as anorexia, depression or self-harm as a result of losing the routine of full-time education? Our schools are more than just places of learning. They are communities which give us all a sense of belonging, routine and support. How can it possibly be right that pubs, restaurants, and nightclubs look set to open more fully ahead of schools? Sadly, these proposals also once again bring to the forefront the attainment gap that we are facing as private schools across the country are preparing to re-open offering full time hours at the start of the new session. And so, I find myself with no alternative than to plead with you to reconsider your intentions for the return to school.

1. If your reason behind these choices is solely to stop the spread of COVID-19, the level of risk faced by young people to the virus is so small compared to that faced by the grandparents who will, inevitably, feel pressure to fill the child care gap so that their children can return to work.
2. If the decisions made on school attendance levels are in any part due to lack of space, have you explored the idea of erecting temporary portacabins or similar structures at school or nearby settings to accommodate more pupils? Whatever the cost, it would undoubtedly pale into comparison to cost of thousands of lost working days and taxable income?
3. Why do the schools have to close for one full day in every 5 to clean the premises and 'support home learning' when every GP practice in the country has had to factor in the cleaning of premises and the upskilling of staff without shutting down to patients completely for one day in every 5?

I realise I am just one voice in many who will seek your attention at these times but I sincerely urge you to consider and respond to these concerns and look forward to hearing from you in due course.

Kind Regards,
[redacted]

15 June 2020 – First Minister

Dear First Minister,

I have [redacted] children who attend [redacted] in [redacted]. I am also a [redacted] and am raising concerns from both professional and parental standpoints.

Education is not just about formal learning, but about our children developing socially and emotionally. School is of course primarily there for education, but the fact is that safeguarding vulnerable children across all socio-economic areas is a vital part of school life. Referrals to the [redacted] have dropped by a significant margin since lockdown began. We simply do not know what is going on behind closed doors in all areas of the City. Our children need to play at all ages of their development. This is vital to develop social and emotional skills, and to protect emotional wellbeing and mental health. As a [redacted] I am very concerned about the effect of the lockdown on children and adolescent mental health, and refer you to the article in the Lancet Journal of Child and Adolescent Mental Health published on June 12th 2020.

The Royal College of Paediatricians and Child Health produced a review and statement on May 2020. This found that social distancing in schools is not proportionate to the low risk of COVID 19 in children. There are very few children with COVID 19 in the community across the UK as a whole. Children are less likely to develop the virus and deaths from COVID 19 in children are rare. The evidence is that children are NOT “super spreaders” of COVID 19 to other members of the community. The article in the British Medical Journal by Munro and Faust is helpful in this regard.

The need for peer social support during this pandemic, now that the initial required lockdown is being eased is paramount. Children understand and explore through play and need peer interaction to do this. Please see the article in the Journal of Clinical Nursing by Usher et al on Social isolation and mental health.

The impact of longer term school closures on educational outcomes will continue when schools reopen. The article by Van Lancker et al in a recent edition of the Lancet states that the current health crisis could become a social crisis with long lasting consequences for children. Education is one of the strongest predictors for health and wellbeing. In the UK more than half of pupils in private schools are taking part in daily online classes, compared with just one in five of their peers in state education.

[redacted] and in particular [redacted] with [redacted] management team have been extremely proactive in producing and maintaining an online learning experience for our children during the necessary lockdown. I am very grateful for the incredible amount of hard work which school teachers have been providing during this crisis.

It is now time for the Scottish Government to take into account all of the evidence and consider if the proposed 33% school attendance is justifiable and adequate. I urge you to consider the wider effects on all children’s emotional and mental health, the risk to vulnerable groups and the attainment gap alongside the low risk of COVID transmission by children and the low risk of developing COVID 19 in children themselves. The evidence supports that with current COVID 19 rates in Scotland we should be planning for minimum 50% attendance in August 2020 and aiming for 100% attendance and if the rates remain low and the social distancing guidelines reduce to 1 metre.

Yours sincerely,

[redacted]

15 June 2020 – First Minister

From: [redacted]

Date: 15 June 2020 at 17:42:28 BST

To: Nicola Sturgeon <Nicola.Sturgeon@snp.org>

Subject: School summer holidays

Hello,

I'm sure you get millions of emails every day and sorry to add to your list but I'm confused as to the latest news that because schools in [redacted] are returning on August 11th this year which is a week earlier than planned that we are now to have that extra lost week added onto next years summer holidays making them now 7 weeks, apparently unison held a vote on this, why were parents not consulted, wouldn't it have made more sense to finish a week early this year then at least it's not impacting on next year, as a parent of [redacted] both who are in [redacted] I am struggling as it is as I'm sure every parent is.

I look forward to hearing from you in due course.

Yours sincerely

[redacted]

15 June 2020 – First Minister

Dear First Minister

I want to express my dismay at the way the Scottish Government's Education Department is handling the re-opening of our schools.

The First Minister's pledge was to lessen the attainment gap – the current policy with regard to schools is only making this gap even wider.

As a [redacted] with [redacted] who are in both private and state education, I am witnessing the massive difference between the two in the delivery of their on-line learning.

Under the current plans, the children in the private sector are going to be even further ahead of their state-educated counterparts by the time school timetables return to normal.

A large percentage of children have not participated in on-line learning (if they even had the facilities to do so , which a lot of them won't !)

The amount of damage to children's mental health cannot be underestimated – from medical friends and family

members I have heard multiple accounts of young children suffering considerable psychological distress because they are missing their friends and the whole school environment including sports and musical group activities.

The other massive factor in this situation is the on-going damage being done to the economy by the fact that a large

percentage of the workforce are unable to return to work as they have no childcare provision.

The figures don't stack up – children very rarely contract Covid 19 and when they do, the infection is relatively mild.

Teachers will be most at risk in the staffroom!!

Many other European countries have had their schools open for weeks with no recorded spikes in infection.

When is the Scottish Government going to make sensible decisions about the education of this generation of young people and the future economy of Scotland?

We are going to be even more dependent on the Westminster Government to bail us out financially. Someone in the upper echelons of the Scottish government has to make a rational decision about schools re-opening

John Swinney doesn't seem to understand the enormity of the damage being done to children who are missing out on months of education.

How many more children will be leaving Primary school with poor basic literacy and numeracy skills? By all means allow vulnerable children and teachers continue to shield as they feel is necessary but for the vast

majority of the Scottish population, schools and nurseries need to reopen normally on 10th August.

Yours sincerely,

[redacted]

15 June 2020 – First Minister

Dear First Minister,

I am writing to you to express my concerns regarding the recent announcements on Education made by [redacted]

Council. As I am sure you will know, [redacted] Council have announced that for the start of the next session all

schools in [redacted] will only have 33% of school role engaged in in-school learning. This is despite the fact that

many can work to 50% of pupils in-school. Many other schools outside of [redacted] including [redacted] have announced plans to work to the 50% model. There seems to be no nationwide consistency and

councils are left to do as little or as much as they want to.

If you are lucky enough to live in and around [redacted] your transition years are going to get an in-school transition in

June. Something that [redacted] schools will not get? I can't see any reason for the difference. I know as a parent of

a [redacted]. That the emotional distress and anxiety caused by poor transition could be extremely damaging.

It feels like we are living in even more of a postcode lottery world than we were before COVID-19. I worry that we

are coming out of one crisis and going straight into another one.

For me the most disappointing aspect during this crisis is the general lack of priority given to Education and getting

the children back to school. Around Europe and the rest of the world Education has been prioritised and kids are

getting back to school safely, full time. In Scotland I see a total lack of any real creative or blue sky thinking on how

we can achieve that here.

Till now I have always been a real supporter of the ideas behind SMP's Education system. I spent eleven years in

[redacted] with my [redacted] children in a very different system. My [redacted] and I chose to move back to Scotland to be

part of something we believed in. We feel let down by this Scottish Government, we feel they have failed the

teachers, the schools and most importantly the children! This breaks my heart.

The Scottish Government need to do everything it takes to give teachers and schools the money and resources they

need to get our kids back to school. We need to recognise that this is a national crisis! What happens now for our

schools is of equal importance as saving lives and saving the economy.

I want to see this Scottish Government & our leaders being brave and making decisions that we can be proud of.

Don't make this generation of children the forgotten generation.

Regards,
[redacted]

16 June 2020 – First Minister

Dear First Minister,

Thank you again for your fantastic work! I really appreciate how difficult it must be for you at this time. I've emailed you previously regarding the return to schools. I have [redacted] and we are really struggling without the routine of school and nursery. Our vital bonding is being affected and the kids are

displaying behaviors we thought we had passed. What's worse is that my [redacted] has completed [redacted] and is now trying to work from home, home school and look after our [redacted] year old. I physically have to go to

work full time. Home schooling simply isn't happening.

I have absolutely no idea how you (the government) can expect people to work AND do childcare even when the

schools go back for the pathetic two days a week. My [redacted] needs to travel within the UK frequently for work and

I have a full time job. Honestly, what should we do?! Go unemployed, cause I certainly can't afford that? I'm sorry to

be so exasperated but I am really at a loss.

I am not concerned that the children will pass the virus. I have done extensive scientific reading on the matter.

Please can I request an immediate return to normal schooling? Otherwise I don't know how we will cope.

Thank you for your service.

Regards,
[redacted]

16 June 2020 – First Minister

- Dear Ms Sturgeon
- As a parent of [redacted] in [redacted] I want to express my great concern at the impact that current plans will have on the welfare and education of the children across Scotland.
- While I welcomed the First Minister's statement on Monday 15th June, and the increased focus on Education, I still have significant concerns and do not believe enough is being done to get Education back on track.
- The current position in Scotland, with primary schools being closed from March until August, is already having a huge mental, social, emotional and educational impact on our children. From an educational perspective, it is well recognised by educators that a child's educational attainment is worse after the summer holidays than before, and the 5 month break, for many children, will result in educational disadvantages that may be irreversible.
- My [redacted] due to [redacted] in August 2020, has already missed out on a key time for interpersonal skills, language and literacy development, which is very disappointing, and something from which [redacted] may never fully recover. My [redacted] was due to attend [redacted] appointments which had also been cancelled. The government's own 'strategic framework for reopening schools' recognises that temporary school closures have been shown to negatively influence a child's educational achievement, both short and long term.
- The idea of mine, or anyone's, children being in school only 2 days a week for a period of time is outrageous. The Scottish Government and Local Authorities should be throwing every resource possible at this to get children back to an almost normal in school timetable as soon as possible. There seems to be a lack of ambition and investment in overcoming the challenges.
- My [redacted] and I both work full time, but it's only myself who has been able to work from home during this period. Can you even begin to imagine the challenge I have been faced with in trying to support [redacted] children to try and continue learning while also working my 45 hours a week? As well as the children this is having a significant and detrimental effect on my own mental health and wellbeing. I feel at breaking point most days now and had been counting down the days to August where my children might regain some normality in their lives, continue their education and life at home may generally be happier. During the summer I am also already faced with the prospect of having to take unpaid leave just to manage – and this will have a disastrous impact on our finances.
- While they are in school 2 days, due to work commitments, I already know I will be unable to support their home learning the other 2.5 days and this is incredibly unfair and unequitable for them. I already know many parents who are in a position to be able to hire tutors to support that additional learning for their children. As if the attainment gap wasn't bad enough already? We need

- Page 2 of 3 to acknowledge that this is happening and actively being planned by parents who can afford to. In addition the children of key workers in my area can access school for 4.5 days per week. 2 of those days for formal teaching, but during the other 2.5 they will get support with the home learning work. How can this possibly be fair? My children are going to be unfairly disadvantaged long term because I am not designated a key worker and can't afford private tuition?
- It's not even just about the damage to attainment- can you imagine how disastrous this is for children in unstable homes or severe poverty where school is their safe space? My children are well fed and cared for, sadly many many children across Scotland are not, and particularly for them, these current plans are far from good enough.
- The impact on the welfare of the children across our region cannot be underestimated. For many children, school is their "safe place". This has been removed, with no hope of return for many months and even then on a very part-time basis. Countless children living in deprivation get themselves up and out to school because it is a warm building, with the promise of a warm meal, from someone who might be kind to them and notice them for a while.
- And not all vulnerabilities are visible. We have always relied on teaching staff to help identify child protection issues. This has been lost and I can't bear to imagine the number of children who may be suffering across Scotland with no one to turn to and no one to even notice. Concerns about the extended impact of Covid-19, such as children being exposed to alcoholism and domestic abuse, have already been raised. Some of these children are not known to services and may not easily be identified as priority cases.
- The coronavirus pandemic has been, and remains, very difficult for all aspects of society. For children in particular, who are unlikely to understand the rationale behind the current restrictions, their life has simply been shrunk. Home schooling is not equal for all, due to both parental work commitments and deprivation. The provision offered for home schooling by schools and teachers to children has varied greatly. We have no reason to believe that this level of inequality and disparity in home-school support would be rectified under the current proposals and I feel I have outlined already in this letter.
- The WHO has said the best place for children is in school. Paediatric departments across Scotland have seen tiny numbers of COVID positive cases and no mortality has occurred in the under 15 years age group in Scotland. The Public Health England report last week confirmed that children are not significantly affected by Covid-19. The RCPCH's summary of the evidence available worldwide on covid-19 in children (updated weekly) suggests that, as far as we can know from the limited evidence currently available, children are both unlikely to become seriously unwell with covid-19 and unlikely to spread the condition even if carrying it. The government's 'strategic framework for reopening schools' also recognises the weakness of the evidence in support of schools remaining closed and states that a minority of the Chief Medical Officer's Advisory Group felt that "once the timing was appropriate to enable opening of schools in any form, physical distancing in classrooms may not be a necessary measure and that fully re-opening schools should be considered." I support this view and our desire for all children to be fully educated and not further disadvantaged by this pandemic.
- Across Scotland many independent schools have indicated that they will be resuming schooling, in school, full time. Their smaller class sizes and larger facilities to enable this. Our state educated children will be the victims of significant social and educational inequality under the current proposals. This is unacceptable.

- Page 3 of 3 Given that the Scottish schools do not return for two months and the early hopeful signs of falling rates of covid-19, why is the first position not for all schools to assume they will fully re-open as normal in August? This should be Plan A, and “blended” (PART TIME) schooling should be Plan B.
 - Re-opening schools fully should surely be our first option, with preparations simultaneously made for a back-up plan of maximal schooling as safely as possible, should a second wave of covid-19 hit. In the event that there is a second wave and full re-opening is not possible, plans could be put in place now to create temporary classrooms in local community or commercial spaces. Could retired teachers or teaching assistants be called upon to help, in the same way that retired NHS workers have been asked to return? Given that the NHS was able to create and staff temporary hospitals in a few weeks, one wonders why the same cannot be done to ensure that education can be offered on a full time basis for all of our children.
 - I understand the concerns of both teachers and some parents about returning to the classroom and the need to comply with social distancing measures. However, many children and staff have been in keyworker school and nursery hubs throughout this pandemic. The teaching and nursery staff who have facilitated this deserve recognition and thanks. They also provide a potentially valuable resource in exploring how covid-19 has impacted those children and staff already in close proximity to one another. What has been the level of covid-19 amongst staff and pupils in these settings?
 - On behalf of my children, who do not easily have a voice of their own, I am telling you that the long-term impact of continued school closures will have immeasurable effects on the social, emotional and educational welfare of my children and our family. Not just my children but all our children across Scotland and with potentially wider reaching negative consequences. School is not and never was, just about education. Let us use that knowledge to drive some sensible decision-making.
 - There are risks in respect of Covid-19. However there are also very real, current risks in moving forwards with what is currently proposed in regard to schooling and I must raise these concerns.
 - I urge you to aim for the full re-opening of schools and full-time education of all children in Scotland from August, if the current covid-19 case numbers and the “r” number continues to fall. The aim of lockdown was to prevent the NHS being overwhelmed and this has been achieved. We must now consider how to minimise the negative impact of this situation for all of our children.
 - Yours sincerely,
 - [redacted]
- [redacted]

16 June 2020 – First Minister

Dear Nicola Sturgeon

I am writing to you to express my real concerns over the current plans that are being put in place for schools in Scotland restarting in August. I am struggling to understand why we are putting measures in place that seem to be based more on current restrictions and old data rather than looking ahead to where we will be as a country come August. Should we not be planning for schools to open as normal and get education back on track immediately? Our children's education has already been massively compromised and this can't be allowed to go on for any longer than is absolutely necessary.

I think there needs to be a serious reassessment of the need for such strict social distancing in schools? Multiple studies have now concluded that kids are at a very low risk from the virus & very rarely pass it on. I understand there may be more risks for teachers and adult staff in schools but really they should be classed as key workers because it's just as important for them to be at work as any other key worker. Increased hygiene routines and health checks could be put in place to further reduce this risk but the risk to our kids' whole future massively outweighs this in my opinion. The consequences of these decisions in terms of our kids' social development and their education needs being properly met pose a much higher risk to their future wellbeing than the virus ever has or will.

In my experience the standard of education and support for kids that's been on offer during lockdown has been incredibly poor and that leaves me very concerned about this blended learning model, which is vague to say the least at this point. It all looks like backwards thinking to me & unnecessarily prolonging the effect of all this on our kids. Their education has been impacted enough already and we need to have a serious rethink about what is being put in place before any more time and money is wasted on measures that are completely unnecessary. This situation regarding schools is at a critical point and we may be able to arrest any real damage to our children's future if we can make the correct decisions at this time. The potential damage of getting this wrong is massive and we can't allow that to happen.

We need schools open as normal in August for so many reasons, our children's future depends on it. Whether that be from an education and health perspective, an economic standpoint, to allow parents to get back to work and to prevent even more kids being placed in poverty, mental health and child protection. I am begging you to see sense and reassess the balance of risk and do what is right for our children and their futures.

Yours sincerely,

[redacted]

16 June 2020 – First Minister

-----Original Message-----

From: [redacted]

Sent: 16 June 2020 16:09

To: [redacted]; [redacted]; First Minister <firstminister@gov.scot>

Subject: Current plans for schools returning in August

Good afternoon,

I am writing to you to discuss my concerns regarding government and local council plans for the return of pupils across schools.

I am an extremely concerned parent who has children in [redacted] schools, 1 currently in [redacted], and [redacted] transitioning - [redacted]

As someone who also works [redacted] sector, I am getting extremely concerned regarding the amount of time that my children are going to be in school for come August. Currently the information we have been given is that my [redacted] school children will be 'in school learning' 1 day a week, and I am awaiting information regarding my youngest but the rumours are that this will be 1.5-2 days a week.

With having both a child ([redacted]) who is extremely motivated and is accessing the coursework/activities sent out to [redacted] and completing this well and a child ([redacted]) who is reluctant to participate in coursework/activities sent out to [redacted], I (along with many other parents I'm sure) am feeling the continued pressures of the current situation extremely concerning and overwhelming, not only from an education point of view for my children but also from a work related point of view for myself and my [redacted]. My job [redacted] as you are aware is not a job that can be worked from home and my [redacted] is a [redacted] and again cannot carry out his work from home, therefore this makes trying to return to work for both of us extremely difficult.

My current position within [redacted] is [redacted] which is dependent on the children we have attending our setting. Having sent my current availability to my employer for year 2020-2021 (which is really unknown due to my children attending school/childcare) - how is my boss supposed to allocate me hours - when I cannot really tell her how much I am going to be available as my kids education plans are not yet currently fully in place?

I strongly believe that as a government, a local council and our own community, we should be accessing all available halls etc in our local communities and working together where we can to gain as much access as possible to get these children back in to full time education as a top priority for both the children and their parents.

When health was a top priority, we had make shift hospitals and ex staff and general volunteers pulled in from across the country and I strongly believe we should be accessing this same amount of resources from wherever we can to get our children back in to as much full time education they deserve to be receiving.

We have empty community centres, halls and buildings across the country that can be adapted, and student teachers, ex- teachers and I'm sure plenty of volunteers to get this sorted as a priority to ensure current measures can be continued along with other options put in place to get our young people back to full time education and just importantly their friends, as soon as possible.

I know this is an extremely challenging situation for everyone and appreciate the coronavirus current measures need to be considered, and I also realise that the government and councils have been working hard to ensure this is resolved as well and as quickly as it can be, but I just feel there are other options we can be exploring to get our young people back to as near to full time education as quickly as possible.

I look forward to hearing back from you all at your earliest convenience.

Kindest Regards
[redacted]

16 June 2020 – First Minister

From: [redacted]

Date: 16 June 2020 at 16:15:13 BST

To: douglas.chapman.mp@parliament.uk

Subject: Education and economy Urgent attention!!!

Hi Nicola

I hope you are well, I am emailing as I need my points to be heard by the Scottish Government I have listed below my major concerns.

Education -

It is utterly ludicrous what the Scottish government is outlining for schools. Phased return !!!! How on Earth do you propose patents are suppose to work ??? Never mind do the jobs of teachers, I am furious. This government in my eyes is no longer running this country, we are being run by scientists who may I add can not seem to agree on anything. The government needs a rocket. I was an SNP supporter but I won't sit back and watch you destroy my Children's education because it would appear "Caution" is the name is the game. I ask as our Scottish first minister, that you push to reopen schools fully in August !!! And this government needs to start listening to the people. There is no balance it's time the politicians started to run this country again, to move us out of Lockdown, it's moving far to slowly.

Economy- I am [redacted] and you are destroying people's lives more than the virus Now. Words and online learning is cheap and of no use, you need to start taking action and get all industries back moving in line with other parts of this country. I am livid that we are the only part of the UK now who is allowing Science to guide us. I say again it's about time politicians held the reins on decision making and again get a move on with it, far to slow to act again.

I used to think the SNP were forward thinking and decisive, I just Can't Watch the daily briefings, the frustration I feel is over whelming.

When oh when will phase 3 be ???let's see some real politics now and decision making. please let's get moving !!!!

I do get that people have lost loved one's and I have done the lock down, the figures are so low now, the virus is going no where we need to learn to live with it, let's get this economy moving. Please listen to my concerns.

16 June 2020 – First Minister

Dear Mr Swinney (*cc'd to First Minister*)

RE: Mental health and economic impact of lock-down on families of school-age children.

I write to implore your consideration of the tremendous impact the shutting of schools is having on families of schoolage

children – from both an economic and a mental health perspective. From our experience, and speaking with

other parents, many are struggling through the current conditions.

We have embraced the efforts to minimise the spread of COVID-19, following the guidelines and restricting

interactions. After three months of trying to balance home-schooling with other duties, coupled with the bleak

outlook, many parents are close to breaking point – especially those trying to work 8-hour days as well as homeschooling

and normal household duties. The impact on us as parents is manifesting in our children and some parents

are worried about high levels of anxiety and even depression in children. We strongly believe these symptoms and

long-term impacts would be mitigated through an engaging, social, learning environment. These thoughts are backed

by over 100 psychological specialists in an open letter – calling for minimal social distancing measures for children:

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/health-53037702>

The current school proposals are painting a concerning future. Four days of school every 3 weeks is unreasonable –

this focussed, conservative tactic is myopic. Focussing purely on the school and coronavirus guidance does not

appropriately apply risk assessment across our society as an integrated system. The strategic goal, of which

schooling and childcare are essential features, is to protect our community. That must be a balanced, risk assessment,

based not only on the coronavirus risks, but the risks to children and families.

This risk assessment should also include the dramatic increases in mental illness currently manifesting. Parents are not

coping. Without childcare & education, we enter a vicious cycle which will bring down our economy faster than

coronavirus. We cannot work sufficiently, we are constantly being interrupted, and we are falling behind our

colleagues who do not have children – increasing our stress and anxiety. This impacts our ability to focus, think

rationally and make decisions, increasing the likelihood of human error and poor performance. Further exacerbating

the problem and degrading family cohesion as parent's are driven to provide for their family. Without childcare, many

parents will be forced to quit work, degrading Scottish business performance, reducing spending, tax payments, and

slowing the economic recovery further. A blended-learning approach will require many parents to leave work.

On behalf of parents, I ask you to advance the release of restrictions on children and childcare. Allow them to be

close together and manage the coronavirus risk with other tactics, such as monitoring temperatures, having rules for

symptomatic children to return home. Please look to transmission data from school/nursery hubs and from schools in

other countries (e.g. France, Netherlands, Germany) who have been operating within the lockdown period. Protect

the medically vulnerable by keeping them isolated, not the entire community.

Please engage with parent groups (and seek their professional expertise), as they are your partners, not only in education, but as economic contributors who rely on schooling and childcare and can't be expected to provide it 73% of the time (4 in-school days every 15 workdays).

This letter will be sent to the First Minister[redacted], MSPs, Councillors, Education committees and social media groups across [redacted], to demonstrate support a broader risk-based approach to school and childcare in Scotland.

Regards
[redacted]

16 June 2020 – First Minister

Your Reference:

[redacted]

Nicola, Nicola's team

I wanted to share a message with you to help you understand how a large number of parents are felling just now, this really is unacceptable.

To [redacted] Council,

What you can do by August;

Phase 1

- meet another household outside in small number
- sunbathing is allowed
- some outdoor activities like golf and fishing
- garden centres and drive-through takeaways can reopen
- some outdoor work can resume
- childminding services can begin

Phase 2

- meet larger groups outdoors
- meet another household indoors
- construction, factories, warehouses, laboratories and small shops can resume work
- playgrounds and sports courts can reopen
- professional sport can begin

Phase 3

- meet people from more than one household indoors
- non-essential offices can reopen
- gyms, museums, libraries, cinemas
- larger shops can open (except Next and Matalan as they opened in phase 1!)
- pubs, restaurants can open
- hairdressers and dentists will reopen
- live events can take place with restricted numbers and physical distancing restrictions (how is that even possible!)

Schools should reopen from 11 August (now 13 August)

The education of our children, the health and wellbeing of these children and their parents is not been considered well

enough. Attending school 1 day a week (for most) and still not returning to a structured routine, being educated at

home by unqualified teachers and working parents is not an education! If they have time to teach during full or part

time working and caring for other children.

If all of the above phases are met and the infection rate continues to fall I expect there will not be a lot of social

distancing going on for most people while doing all of the above things, especially at gyms, retailers, hospitality

venues, live events. How are all of these things less risk than allowing our children (the minority of who have

contracted COVID-19) to return to school?

Also some schools will not start a week early as you have now made the first 2 days in service days for teachers to

prepare and every Friday they have time to prepare for the week ahead, is that not what they are doing back at

school now 3 weeks before their 7 weeks holiday! I appreciate teachers have a hard job but so do we all just now,

most parents are also working through this with their children at home and teaching their children and have no break

or prep time to educate their own children. Personally my children miss out on the first week back as they are 1 of 3

groups and they also miss a week next year as you have decided to close school a week early, is this also a joke, as

if they havent had enough time out of school.

Seriously, I don't know what I expect you to do but this is the reality of how a parent feels just now, anxious, stressed, unsupported with no light in sight. The thought of this still going on in August with not much change from where we are now with education is depressing. I know the guidance on safety, government guidance, WHO guidance etc but that doesn't help with the fact that school will be back 1 day per week and unexperienced struggling parents are expected to educate their children while working (if they still have a job) and hold down all other home responsibilities. Measures are being put in place to restart the economy and try to save businesses quite rightly, the same amount of effort and solutioning should go into the thought process for children returning to school, I guarantee it will look better than what has currently been proposed. A very concerned parent.

16 June 2020 – First Minister

Your Reference:

[redacted]

Hi Nicola

I'm sure this will not make it to you as you seem rather busy just now.

I would like to address the concerns myself and my wife have about education, I watched your speech on Monday

the 15th and believe you want to have schools back to full learning as soon as possible but

[redacted]

councils decision today contradicts this.

You will be aware that they plan for half of the children to return for 2 days, deep clean the building on a Wednesday

and the other half to return on a Thursday and Friday. This doesn't make sense to me, I feel this will impact our

child's education more than this pandemic already has. I'm a [redacted] who look after the [redacted]

across the UK which throughout this whole pandemic has remained open and I take pride in the staff I work with for

making this happen. [redacted] have adopted touch point cleaning throughout the day on the hour every day,

can this not be implemented in schools and full a clean be done after 3pm. As working parents we are also

concerned how we will balance childcare until Christmas as the school [redacted] is telling us this is how long we

should expect this to last.

On a personal note you have been exemplary throughout this crisis and I hope you can push for education to be

restored to some sort of normality in August.

Best Regards

16 June 2020 – First Minister

From: [redacted]

Sent: 16 June 2020 20:33

To: First Minister <firstminister@gov.scot>

Subject: What are we supposed to do?

Hey,

I am a [redacted] working mum of [redacted], I have been unable to work since lockdown and my work has just opened up.

My youngest [redacted] is in the vulnerable category so I haven't been able to use any childcare.

With blended learning happening from August it seems impossible for me to go back to work as I work only during school hours.

I am worried about my job and my anxiety is through the roof right now.

Please can you let me or the country know what the plan is for [redacted] working mothers like me with no family support. I do not want to lose my job.

Kind Regards,

[redacted]

16 June 2020 – First Minister

From: [redacted]
Sent: 16 June 2020 12:13
To: First Minister <firstminister@gov.scot>
Subject: Education

First Minister,

In light of lockdown and the situation we have faced throughout the past months, I am writing to you as a parent, [redacted] and key worker. Whilst I appreciate a virus to which no one can truly report accurate numbers on, has devastated the world, i ask you to consider strongly the impact of returning children to school part time.

As a parent, my children go to different schools, and my university will be starting full time "blended" learning as of August which puts me in a position of needing childcare. I.e grandparents. This then increases the number of people my children come into contact with during their 5 days off school!.

Another issue with this is that my youngest child will be moving into [redacted] and under no circumstances, and i can speak for ALOT of parents, will be sending my child into an environment whereby [redacted] cannot play with friends, socialise and get comfort from [redacted] teacher when he needs it. This is a traumatic experience for children and is absolutely not acceptable to even consider.

There is no evidence to suggest that we have to be 3 weeks behind the rest of the UK, yet we find our economy continuing to plummet due to the decisions you are enforcing on people.

It is essential that you rethink your educational approach and consider the children and not a political stance. Its time to take that risk and get the world moving again!

Thanks
[redacted]

16 June 2020 – First Minister

From: [redacted]

Sent: 16 June 2020 12:50

To: First Minister <firstminister@gov.scot>

Subject: Re school opening

Dear First Minister,

Re. Schools starting back.

I taught for over 40 years and so have experience in the field. This situation is probably the most complex anyone will have to deal with and the amount of unknowns is bottomless unless we accept a year of limited but tight conditions. I have listened to a number of interviews where parents and teachers are tearing their hair out over managing all the variables and I understand that the Scottish Gov. sees that each area will have its own needs, however at this time of crisis I believe we do need one size fits all. I am only looking at Primary Schools here.

The following is the complete antithesis to what we have been trying to do in Scotland but in order to provide stability and routine and so that some learning will take place, needs must when the devil drives.

This would bring all children back in August, avoid looking for halls and broom cupboards as educational spaces, give parents set timetables with the biggest problem being toileting and eating. A slightly shortened day would allow children to sit and eat a packed lunch at their desks and weather permitting a daily active period outdoors. No rotation of children on different days would allow that child's space/desk to be their own and would not be compromised by another child using it on other days.

The most simple solution would be reverting to a "Talk and Chalk(interactive board)" model across the whole country along the following lines -

If parents agree, the social distancing between children should be 1 metre.

Any parent who does not wish to send their child to school in those circumstances should be provided with 'at home learning parcels.'

Teachers would not mingle on one to one basis but would remain behind a desk at 2 metres.

Homework, if set, would be online.

No work would be corrected but taken home at the end of the day to be shared with parents and it would be up to parents to check this each day. No feedback would be required. Parents can go over the work if they wish but not necessary thereby relieving them of some stress.

A national curriculum Framework of educational basics can be quickly prepared for each stage and taught lecture style across the country.

Children with specific **learning** difficulties can be identified in each school and extracted for extra support.

Unfortunately children with behavioural difficulties - always the elephant in the room - must be managed by immediate protocols so that there is no disruption to the already limited learning taking place. This must be acknowledged by Councils and teachers must be backed up.

Travel, arrivals and dismissal can be managed but all will eat into learning time so a programme of online material, (simple examples) tied to the 'new framework' should be made available as extras or challenges.

Lastly - there should be no tests or publishing of school data for this exceptional school year which lies ahead.

Just a thought as we are tying ourselves in knots.

[redacted]

17 June 2020 – FM

From: [redacted]

Sent: 17 June 2020 14:40

To: First Minister <firstminister@gov.scot>

Cc: John Swinney <john.swinney.msp@scottish.parliament.uk>

Subject: Return to School

Everyone would commend your determination to bring down the incidence of Covid-19 and no one, I'm sure would want you to do anything to put lives at risk. Equally, I'm sure that no one doubts your desire to get our children back into full-time education as quickly as possible. But it is how you seem to be going about that ambition that concerns me. At First Minister's Questions today your answers all seemed to imply an approach that rested on existing structures. Where was the creativity and innovation that both you and your Education Secretary set such store by? Given the restrictions imposed by social distancing, that are likely to continue for some time yet, getting a return to normal, full-time schooling (and everyone agrees that 'blended learning', though no doubt necessary as a temporary stop-gap, is no where near that) will require finding additional space - space that only exists outside the present school-estate, and that in turn, if it is to be made use of, will require additional staff - ex-teachers, retired teachers, soon-to-be qualified teachers, and other suitably experienced volunteers - to work in a creative and imaginative way with the support and under the supervision of the existing teacher complement.

What are you doing to bring this about? It's no good leaving this to local authorities. Whatever excuses they give for dragging their feet and however valid those excuses might be, the fact is that like all such bureaucracies they find it extremely difficult to think out of the box. It's up to you as the Government, with whom ultimate responsibility lies, to provide the necessary leadership -the support, the encouragement, and yes, if necessary, the pressure to ensure that they come up with something much better than they are presently proposing.

[redacted]

17 June – FM

Good morning, Ms Sturgeon, I would like to thank you for your stance during the Coronavirus. As someone over 70 I have been religiously following you and your Adviser's advice for people at risk like me and my [redacted]. It pains me when I see such complete disregard for all the sacrifices made by our NHS (my [redacted]) and many other people who are keeping us alive and fed by those who think it is OK for them to flaunt the rules and do exactly as they like. I know you are extremely disappointed in those people, but I really feel that stricter action must be taken to discourage these people – name and shame comes to mind. On another point, I am very concerned about my [redacted] who is due to return to [redacted] school as a new [redacted] on 11th August. [redacted] has stayed home whilst [redacted] Mother has been working [redacted] and looked after by her [redacted], working from home and her [redacted]) – funnily enough this has brought them together, never imagined that [redacted] and [redacted] [redacted] would be baking together – lol! However, she attends a [redacted] school which simply won't be able to practice safe distancing. Is it possible that schools can be kept off until at least there have been no cases for weeks or until there is a vaccine? Best Regards [redacted]

17 June 2020 – First Minister

From: [redacted]

Sent: 17 June 2020 13:12

To: First Minister <firstminister@gov.scot>

Subject: Appealing?

Sorry, First Minister, you are not very appealing and your repetitive performance today underlines this simple fact. How many children in Scotland have suffered from COVID-19 and how many youngsters are suffering from school closures?

I look forward to a response,

[redacted]

17 June 2020 – First Minister

From: [redacted]

Sent: 17 June 2020 14:19

To: First Minister <firstminister@gov.scot>

Subject: Edinburgh Council Schooling

Good Afternoon

I hope this email find you well. I understand life will be very busy for you however I feel the need to email you regarding the current schooling situation in [redacted].

My [redacted] children currently attend [redacted]school in [redacted]. I am a [redacted] and have worked throughout the pandemic, my [redacted] working from home.

The current plan for school provision in [redacted] is poor and frankly a let down. As a political party, I feel that the SNP are always striving to reduce the poverty gap for all children in Scotland and I feel that as a party you need to focus on not allowing an Education gap to arise alongside this. News that councils local to [redacted] are offering 50/50 learning with two days classroom in comparison to 1/5 days in [redacted] is disappointing.

I have worked throughout this pandemic carrying for women and families. My husband has worked full time from home and given he is not a key worker, we have not been offered any childcare support. We have had to think outside the box for childcare and education - the last day we had "off" together as a family was 20th March where none of us were working. Completing home learning whilst juggling work has been challenging but we have managed. I urge you to ask [redacted] Council now to think outside the box, yes it will be challenging but most families have managed their own complicated blend of learning so schools should be able to come up with a better option than that.

Many thanks and kind regards

[redacted]

17 June 2020 – First Minister

Sent: 17 June 2020 16:41

To: First Minister <firstminister@gov.scot>

Subject: Schools

I was very disappointed to hear John Swinney a few days ago talk about part time lessons in schools may go on for a year.

I think full time normal lessons have to operate urgently otherwise there going to be hundreds of thousands of children who's future is badly affected. I know that the safety of everyone in schools is very important but at the moment what I see as people are gradually going back to work is more and more older grandparents being forced to look after children Who are not at school and that is putting them and children at high risk.

Finally unlike teachers lots of people are suffering badly financially and are desperate to get back to work (when safe to do so)but can't until their children go back to school.

(At least I believe teachers have been getting their full salary) This letter is confidential [redacted]

17 June 2020 – First Minister

From: [redacted]

Sent: 17 June 2020 12:49

To: First Minister <firstminister@gov.scot>

Subject: Fwd: Swinney and the ERG

Dear Ms Sturgeon,

I write to you as a last resort due to my on-going campaign for education recovery in Scotland. I don't know who else to write to on this matter. I know you are busy.

I have been campaigning to reopen schools in Scotland for the last six weeks, my own feeling is that the full closure of schools was a poor decision in the first place and that the genuine damage done to our pupils throughout COVID has been enormous.

So far the ERG and Swinney have done nothing, set no targets and shown no leadership for genuine recovery of our education. The ideas of parents were simply not considered (summer schools, alternative venues, 7 day teaching) and it appears now that more and more parents are seeing things my way. Thankfully.

I am noticing a shift in parents being supportive of schools, to now being angry with them.

Mr Swinney has shown no leadership in his ERG position (it could be argued ever as education secretary) and is simply appeasing union demands from the EIS and SQA. In my opinion he is not a leader and is out of touch with parents viewpoint.

I am now at the stage (since my children and being denied the education and assessment my taxes pay for) of exploring the ideas with schools of children following the English curriculum of GCSE and A-levels (to guarantee their assessment) and how our local schools can break-away from Scottish Government, SQA and EIS control.

I will continue to campaign for the rights of my children to attend full time education from 11th August.

[redacted]

17 June 2020 – First Minister

-----Original Message-----

From: [redacted]

Sent: 17 June 2020 11:51

To: First Minister <firstminister@gov.scot>

Subject: August Return for Schools

I have been receiving your letters via my children's school and have some concerns about the way you are planning to return the children.

1. I work from home, 5 days per week, currently doing 10 hours per day, in August I will be returning to office, how am I expected to home school [redacted] children 3 days per week? Has the parents consideration even been factored in?
2. Some parents can only work while their children are at school, this will affect parents income and potentially jobs - what considerations have you taken on board here?
3. Everyone in the country is being encouraged to go back to work yet teachers are basically doing half their job - why?
4. Many children may fall behind in their schooling as we all know there are too many distractions at home especially as parents are not teachers and will be working for most of the day, what considerations have you put in here?
5. Is the amount of work expected of the children being reviewed / reduced in line with the above or are parents expected to pick up the slack?

I have great concerns that this will be how it looks going forward and there is nothing temporary about it. This has been brought in to suit teachers and little consideration to parents situation. I know you will spout "health and safety" etc but I am puzzled as to why the burden of teaching is being left to parents with minimal information being shared.

Some families are going to struggle with this and this will ultimately impact the children.

Could you please give me your honest opinions on the above and not just send a standard answer which tells me nothing. I really hope as first minister you are pushing for full time schooling to return.

Kind regards

[redacted]

Sent from my iPhone

17 June 2020 – First Minister

Good Afternoon to you both,

I hope this email finds you both well?

We live in [redacted] and I have just received the proposal for my [redacted] primary school for returning in August. I

fully understand and appreciate the enormity of the coronavirus situation but I cannot comprehend that my kids will only be in school for 3 days every 2 weeks, and even then for the first 2 weeks they will only attend for 1 day over a 2 week period.

I am extremely worried at the adverse effect that this will have on mine and other children's learning. It is already a struggle and challenging to keep the children engaged in home learning.

I was wondering as it is still 8 weeks until the children will be returning to school if either, the social distancing rules will be relaxed to 1 metre to allow more children in the school which would then allow for more days actually in school or if Scotland continues in the right direction with the crisis that you will announce at least possible

amendments to the return to school if the virus is under control?

Obviously I understand, and I am of the same opinion that the health of my children and all the teachers and school staff is paramount but I hope you agree and understand that it will be virtually impossible to teach in that timescale and as both myself and my [redacted] work full time, who will look after the children when they are not at school and home learn them?

I appreciate you taking the time to read my email and I look forward to hearing your reply.

Kindest regards

[redacted]

17 June 2020 – First Minister

Dear Ms Sturgeon

I just wanted to forward to you an example of information that I receive from my children's school in [redacted].

As you can see they think they are fulfilling the Scottish government expectations even though they are planning for children to return for only one day per week from August, they refuse to host any school classes on a Friday and refuse to engage with any online tuition, despite ensuring everyone had access to a device.

Throughout these 12 weeks there has been no contact with teachers (I understand that most teachers are working only one session a week) and parents have been left to instruct their children on top of having to work at home (for those still lucky enough to have a job).

Parents patience is wearing thin for Education authorities and head teachers who will only do the basic minimum for their pupils and still expect full pay and full holidays and now have taken one week off the school year next June because they have to start one week early this August.

I understand that this lack of initiative and effort may not be what you are expecting from schools . I am certainly wondering why I pay full income tax and council tax if I am expected to educate my children 80% if the time.

Yours sincerely,
[redacted]

17 June 2020 – First Minister

I am writing to express my frustration, sadness and anger at the proposals being made by [redacted] and other local councils with regard to the return of pupils to school in August. Specifically, [redacted] council's proposal for blended learning with 33% in-school learning and the rest at home, with NO DIGITAL CONTENT (why?!?) is appalling.

Last night, I listened to John Swinney on the National Parents Forum webinar in despair. If I'm kind, I hope he was

just toeing the party line with his responses but his whole demeanour was of someone who thinks they get it (he has a

9 year old child in school) but everything he said demonstrated he patently did not get it. Blaming / passing the buck

to Councils is particularly poor, as is trotting out the 'if only Westminster...' line.

I note, with some encouragement, that your tone on the whole matter is changing as you listen to and respond to the

situation but please be clear that whatever political game is going on here is already deeply damaging people.

I appreciate this pandemic situation is unprecedented but the government, particularly you and John Swinney, need

to step up to lead this crisis in education with the same rigour as you applied to the NHS crisis.

I'll try to keep this brief.

- Fundamentally we should be aiming to get kids back full time in August. Their mental and physical wellbeing

depends on it. Their educational and social development requires it. Our national wellbeing – physical, mental &

economic is based upon it. Anything less is a fudge. And yes, I listened again and again to the fact that 'the scientific

advice says social distancing...' but two things 1) this is a one-size-fits-all approach and not specific to the science

relating to children and adults in a school environment and 2) with respect, we are now at the point where the pill is

worse than the ill. We have no definite way out of this pandemic, we now need to take some bold risk-based

decisions. Risk management is not about managing one thing away completely to the detriment of all other factors, it

is about balance. On balance I believe it is less risky to our national wellbeing for kids to return school in August than

the alternative.

- I respect and admire teachers who have worked tirelessly through all of this. And again this is why I support a fulltime

return to school in August. Asking teachers to continue with 'blended' learning ie doing 2 jobs at once whilst

continuing to dilute the educational experience of our young people is not an option. We need the very best people

teaching our children and we need them at the top of their game. It goes without saying that those who are vulnerable

or need to shield need to continue to do so.

- There is talk at length about 'a high quality learning experience'. This is NOT happening. Our children are NOT

being taught at the moment. Material (of varying quality) is being prepared and posted. If/how this is received is

down to a myriad of different circumstances, all of which are happening behind closed doors. In our family, we are

blessed to only have to contend with the crazy juggle of both working and home-schooling. For those with additional

challenges relating to either their and/or their child's ability, it is beyond comprehension that this should go on any

longer than is absolutely necessary.

- Digital lessons are NOT happening. For us in [redacted], the council's policy is that video-calls are not permitted

(unclear as to why). If we must persist with 'blended' learning then as an absolute minimum we need to provide online

learning where the teacher is talking to / interacting with their pupils and actually teaching them. There is

absolutely no reason in the 21st century that this cannot happen with a balanced risk approach.

- Consistency – local councils needs to raise their game and the government needs to stop passing the buck to local

authorities. If we truly are all in this together then politics need to be put aside and the best result for everyone

achieved. Instead we are wasting precious effort pan-Scotland (and UK) figuring out standards that could be set and

enforced nationally with local discretion on only the finer detail.

Finally, how can we even consider allowing international travel and movement across Scotland and the rest of the

UK when we cannot get local schools back. If we continue to minimise travel then we could happily open local

schools, without restriction, based on the specific profile of the disease in the local environment.

Elements of this must be a political game but you are now dicing with people's wellbeing. Whatever the ultimate

outcome of this, the process going on at the moment of uncertainty is upsetting people beyond what is reasonably

tolerable. We need to make clear decisions and soon, with politics firmly on one side.

Yours in anticipation,

[redacted]

Depute First Minister Correspondence

8 June – DFM

> On 8 Jun 2020, at 16:06, [redacted]> wrote:

>

> I was just wondering what the rationale is to make all schools return on 11th August 2020? I am a [redacted]up in [redacted]and our return date is 17th August 2020. Surely it would have been a lot less work to allow us to stick to our original holiday pattern. Lots of us including myself have holidays booked. And although these will be honoured - why create all this extra work? My colleagues will have to cover for me if I end up going on holiday (I am trying to change it but might not be able to). I have answered many surveys asking when I want the extra week - but I'd rather just have my original return date because what in effect is going to happen now is I am only going to get a 5 week summer holiday after what has been the term from hell. I have had to learn how to work from home using various digital platforms, had endless meetings and training sessions, spend hours and hours on SQA estimates and Quality Assurance and communicated daily with my many secondary students. Working from home has been harder than being in school. If there was ever a summer I needed the whole break it is this one. I would like to know why this was given as the return date for the whole of Scotland and why we could not just stick to our original dates?

>

> Yours

> [redacted]

> (SNP Supporter)

8 June – DFM

From: [redacted]

Sent: 08 June 2020 12:42

To: Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills <DFMCSE@gov.scot>

Subject: Feedback on Education Recovery

Good Afternoon Mr Swinney,

Before I begin my letter, may I say that I have been extremely supportive of this government's response to the pandemic - especially in comparison to the response from the UK Government. Our recovery plan has been much more detailed and focussed on the social implications which I appreciate.

However I have felt compelled to write to express my concern about the plans for August and the schools returning.

Our children have already lost over a whole term due to this pandemic and most parents have been supportive of the need to do this up to a point. I feel that the time is coming that we must get back to normal - not "a new normal".

We are being offered as I understand, just two days of time in school with the rest of the work to be done at home. I think that this is simply not acceptable. Two days is not enough time to grasp a new concept to them take home and learn. In addition, I feel strongly that Primary age children are too young for self directed learning. The digital options that are being offered are not sufficient and there is also the devastating lack of social contact to bear in mind. The current situation and even the plans for recovery are in direct contravention of the rights of the child to an education. I know my [redacted] has not had an education in the past few months. The reality is that come August, parents who are currently furloughed will have to get back to work and people will be forced to make their own arrangements for childcare by helping each other out. This inevitable mixing of families will negate all of the work that you are doing to distance the children at school rendering it pointless. I know from my community that these discussions are already taking place.

I am increasingly concerned that these measures will also widen further the inequality gap which your government has been striving to address. People I know with a lot more money than me are already talking about hiring tutors - so those who can will look after their children and those who can't will suffer. I appreciate that vulnerable families will still be offered places, but there will still be many children that suffer as a result of this. Effectively this model will bring in a privatisation of education - something which I cannot understand how an SNP government could countenance.

My concern is that where is the innovation to deliver education? We built at record speed, new hospitals and mobilised retired NHS staff and redeployed staff. Why can we not do the same for Education?

I'd like to know how you will be consulting the public on all of this moving forward.

I know that many people share my thoughts that we should not be socially distancing children at all. The risks of doing so far outweigh the small risk of children contracting the virus. We

are storing up huge problems for our society in future as a result of this. People are scared to let their children go out to play - increasing the already high childhood obesity problem from too much time spent gaming.

I would urge you to reconsider the plans to socially distance children and get everyone back as normal in August. Or at least consult widely with the public on this as an initial step. We have lost a term of education. Please, I implore you do not let our children suffer any longer.

Yours Sincerely

[redacted]

9 June - DFM

9 June 2020

Ref: A11053/2020/CK

Dear John

Re - Reopening of Schools – Blended Learning System

I have been contacted by a number of constituents asking for clarity on how the blended learning system will operate when the schools reopen.

My constituents have explained that they are aware that on the 11 August, all schools will reopen but will operate a blended learning system which would see children spend half their time in classes and half at home to allow for "appropriate social distancing".

They have asked for further clarification on how the blended learning system will operate and what the provisions will be on non-school days. My constituents tell me that they appreciate that we are in difficult times and we need to ensure the safety of our children and staff but they really need to know what provisions are going to be in place.

I would be very grateful if you could provide clarification to the issues raised.

Kind regards
Willie

Willie Rennie MSP (North East Fife)

9 June - DFM

From: [redacted] **On Behalf Of** Briggs M (Miles), MSP

Sent: 09 June 2020 17:24

To: Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills <DFMCSE@gov.scot>

Subject: : School return date August 2020

Dear Deputy First Minister,

I enclose an email received from my Edinburgh constituent [redacted] in relation to the return of schools in August and a problem she is facing in regard to this date. She also raises concerns about whether the council can make its own decisions.

[redacted] email is self explanatory and I am sympathetic to her position and would be grateful for your comments on these matters.

Thank you for your attention in this matter.

Kind regards,

Miles Briggs MSP

From: [redacted]

Sent: 09 June 2020 11:37

I'm writing to draw your attention to the situation that my family (and I'm sure many others across [redacted] finds ourselves in as a result of the recent Scottish Government announcement that schools will return on 11th August, when as you will know the return date for CEC schools was due to be the following week.

We have a holiday (in the UK) booked 8th-15th August, booked in good faith when [redacted] schools were due to restart on 19th. We understand that even if schools restart on 11th all pupils won't be returning from day 1 for the whole of each school day, and having been assured by the headteacher that our family won't be penalised if we go on holiday and our children restart school on Mon 17th, we wouldn't normally be concerned.

However, our [redacted] is currently in [redacted] and will be starting [redacted] in August. I'm concerned that if we go on holiday [redacted] will miss out on important welcome/induction activities such as meeting new teachers and [redacted] new classmates, being shown around the school and being issued important paperwork. So we are left with a choice between cancelling our holiday (and incurring a financial loss) or our [redacted] experiencing a more stressful start to high school.

I have read the relevant sections of the SG document **Coronavirus (COVID-19): strategic framework for reopening schools, early learning and childcare provision** and associated information for parents & carers on Parent Club, and I don't see any acknowledgement anywhere that there will be families in the same position as us, who have to choose between cancelling a holiday and incurring financial loss, or having their child at a disadvantage through missing the first vital days of S1.

I have already contacted my constituency MSP, Daniel Johnson, but so far the only reply I have received is that he is going to take it up with the council. According to the SG document, councils do have some flexibility to implement the arrangements as appropriate for their communities. However I have also contacted my councillors about the same issue and have received a response on their behalf from [redacted] This indicates that the council do not see any flexibility around the 11th August start date, which has been mandated by the government, so it seems clear that it is a Scottish Government issue.

I'd be grateful if you could flag this problem up to the government and ask them to reconsider their short-notice decision to bring the school return date forward, leaving those who have booked holidays at a disadvantage.

Yours sincerely

[redacted]

8 June 2020 - DFM

From: Daniel Johnson MSP <daniel.johnson.msp@parliament.scot>
Sent: 10 June 2020 11:37
To: [redacted]
Subject: FW: Mental Health of School Children in Edinburgh (Case Ref: DJ8693)

Dear [redacted]

I have forwarded on correspondence from my constituents, [redacted], regarding concerns they have that the lack of schooling caused by the Covid-19 pandemic is having an adverse affect on children.

[redacted] have set out a number of recommendations that they feel would greatly benefit children at this time and as the schools go back, and I would be grateful if you could respond to the concerns and recommendations set out in the below email.

Many thanks in advance for your help in this matter.

Kind regards,
Daniel

Daniel Johnson MSP
0131 541 2145
danieljohnson.org.uk
Constituency Office
134 Comiston Road, Edinburgh, EH10 5QN

From: [redacted]
Sent: 8 June 2020 15:33
To: [redacted], Johnson D (Daniel), MSP
Subject: Mental Health of School Children in Edinburgh

[redacted]

Dear [redacted] & Mr Johnson

We have 2 [redacted] children at [redacted] and [redacted] and I'm writing to you to draw your attention to the adverse effects the lack of schooling has not only on the children's education, but (more importantly) their well-being. We of course, fully realise the enormous challenges the education sector is facing, but we do not feel that [redacted] is doing enough to help children get through the current situation.

One concern is the lack of concrete input from schools with regard to the children's learning. There has been barely any video or audio contact from teachers to give the children a sense of the school still being there for them. The weekly 'learning grids' suggest activities, but no expectations are put on the children to complete any of the tasks. We know from parents whose children attend private schools, that online lessons are delivered daily, that there is a proper timetable and that the whole class comes together once a week for a group video call.

Our children had nothing like that and there has been no contact between classmates for 10 weeks. We know from other Councils even within Scotland, more is being done for children than is currently happening in [redacted] which is very concerning and disappointing.

This is not just a matter of impacting education, but the main concern is for our children's mental well-being. We are very concerned that even once schools do go back in August, our children still won't receive the best support from their school. We hope that the Council is creating a new child wellbeing

strategy alongside keeping all the children, staff and parents Covid-Secure. As a suggestion, this strategy, at its foundation should ensure the continuation and stability of the teacher/child and teacher class relationship even during future lockdowns and certainly throughout the blended learning phase for however long that endures.

Another suggestion related to lack of space in schools because of social distancing, is to facilitate outdoor learning. [redacted] has lots of outdoor spaces that could be used by teachers [redacted], beaches, parks etc...) and in that way children could attend school more often than just once or twice a week. This would help not only the children's education & well-being, but also all the thousands of parents that are currently unable to work and are increasingly at risk of losing their jobs because of it. In addition, a lot of attention was given to the army creating field hospitals in this national crisis and an idea might be to get utilize the spaces to help the education sector and set up 'field schools'.

We are really confused and disappointed how the children in the public-school sector have just been cut adrift in this manner and believe and hope for all our sakes that more can be done to protect the future generation.

Your Sincerely,

[redacted]

9 June 2020 - DFM

From: [redacted]

Sent: 09 June 2020 16:42

To: john.swinney.msp@parliament.sco <john.swinney.msp@parliament.sco>;
nicola.sturgeon.msp@parliament.scot <nicola.sturgeon.msp@parliament.scot>

Subject: School Return in August - Blended Learning

Good Afternoon Mr Swinney & Ms Sturgeon

I was recently asked as a parent of a school aged child to complete a parental survey for education recovery by my local authority [redacted].

The final question on the survey asked:-

If you have any other suggestions about what might work well for a blended model of home and school learning from August, please use the comment box below to provide details (250 words max)

I had much more than 250 words so I was asked to send an email which would be passed on and included in the information being gathered.

I have attached a copy of what I sent as I believe we as parents need to be heard and our opinions taken into consideration as this affects our children's health, wellbeing and mental health.

You have the opportunity to make changes in the educational system and I think this has to be seriously considered before we decide to send our children back to school in August if they return.

Thank you for taking the time to read this email.

Kindest Regards

[redacted]

Parental Survey – Education Recovery in [redacted]

10. If you have any other suggestions about what might work well for a blended model of home and school learning from August, please provide details.

My child is currently in Primary [redacted] and is due to move to secondary school in August, if, and when the schools return. Our children have missed a full term of school. School term 2019-2020 they should have attended school for 188 days or 37 weeks 3 days, up till they are supposed to stop on Friday 26th June they will have missed 56 days or 11 weeks 1 day of school, which is nearly a third of their final primary school education.

This is one of the most important terms as they should have had transition days, leavers parties, last day year book presentations, learning their leavers song but

most importantly mentally getting prepared to leave the school, teaching staff and classmates that they have known for the last 7 years. They have been in classes of between 20 and 30 children, and a school of between 200-350. You are now expecting them to move to a new school, where there could be anywhere between 800-1800 pupils. How much of a challenge is that when they have had no transition?

My [redacted] did require an enhanced transition as [redacted] is very [redacted] but this has never happened for [redacted] or other children requiring the same assistance.

Do the education department think that it is acceptable to do this to our children who were due to transition this year? I think this is going to cause some of our children to have serious health, wellbeing and mental health issues very soon due to the stress and anxiety this will bring.

I know this virus has been terrible and no-one is sure what is going to happen next, but as a parent I think this seriously needs to be re-looked at.

Why can they not look at extending the school term. Instead of schools transitioning in August, why can the school year not be extended to transition to new classes/schools in January then everyone moves up at the same time. This would give all the children a chance to catch up with what they have missed in nurseries, classes and schools that they left in March. What difference does it make if the school year runs from January to December instead of August to June as it is still split into 4 terms in the one school year? Maybe by this time there will be more scientific evidence collated and maybe closer to some sort of cure or prevention. This would make returning to a more normal school environment, plus they will have the chance to have 4 months in their class, nursery, school that they left with the blended model of learning that they are currently experiencing without the added stress of being in a different class or school with different teaching staff and pupils.

Another suggestion is re-sitting the year which I know is not ideal, but it is an option that should be considered.

You are asking our children to return in August where there will be a blended model of learning, split between learning in school and learning at home. This is not going to benefit our children at all. They will not be in a normal school environment as you will be restricted to how many children you can have in the school at any one time. Having blended education means that they are receiving diluted education and will not benefit from a full year's professional tuition. We as parents are dedicated and willing to help educate our children to the best of our abilities but fall far short of the capabilities of professional teaching staff. I feel our children will be deprived of the proper education received by all other students who have previously completed these years prior to the current situation.

We are very concerned about the staff and children being able to maintain social distancing. How can a teacher ensure children are adhering to this and, also be able to review their work personally as has happened with previous students, and offer assistance whilst maintaining 2m distancing? We are also very concerned about

children maintaining distance whilst moving throughout the school, on breaks and using toilet facilities.

World Health Organisation are now advising that we should all wear face coverings when social distancing cannot be guaranteed. Will it be the intention of the Education Board to implement this as a rule, if so, will they be supplying face coverings for all staff and pupils if and when they return in August?

It has been announced today by the majority of English primary schools, they will not be able to reopen this term, which does not meet government targets. This shows that the government and educational boards are aspiring to get staff and pupils back to school too early without having the full resource and back up research confirmed to prove that it is safe and feasible to do so.

We do understand that it is very important to get children back into education especially those at risk, in a vulnerable situation and from disadvantage backgrounds to safeguard our children's future, however this can only be done when we know it is safe for both the children and the staff to do so.

9 June - DFM

From: Scott J (John), MSP <John.Scott.msp@parliament.scot>
Sent: 09 June 2020 13:06
To: Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills
<DFMCSE@gov.scot>
Subject: FW:

Dear John

I have been contacted by a number of parents of children at [redacted], who are concerned that it is being proposed to deliver education at that school on a three group rota involving 1.5 days of classroom teaching being delivered per week, meaning in practice a half day less per week for pupils.

I have appended an email received from one parent, which is very typical of the understandable concerns expressed to me by other parents.

From my own discussions with the Council, they have told me that a two group rota is their preference, and I therefore expect that to be delivered across most local schools in [redacted], but that once the calculations based on floor space, 2 metre social distancing and staff are done, [redacted] can only operate a three group rotation.

They have also advised me that unless there is significant additional funding from the Scottish Government, this will be the reality for large primary schools near to capacity such as [redacted].

You will, I know, appreciate the concerns expressed to me by the parents and their desire that their children are treated in the same way as other children across the Council area, but that this will not be possible without additional resources.

I am therefore asking you to agree in these exceptional circumstances to making such additional resources available to [redacted], in order that a two group rota can be delivered across all local schools, and therefore to help ensure that all local pupils and families are treated equally.

Thank you for your consideration of this matter and I look forward to hearing from you.

Kind regards,

John

-----Original Message-----

From: [redacted]
Sent: 08 June 2020 19:41
To: Scott J (John), MSP <John.Scott.msp@parliament.scot>
Subject:

Hello Mr Scott

>

>>

>> I wish to make [redacted] council education department, aware of my concerns to the proposed part time teaching hours, at [redacted].

>>

>> I am the mother of a new [redacted] at the school and the proposed 1.5 days per week schooling for the children is simply just not good enough.

>>

>> The majority of schools in the [redacted] area have a proposed two days class time teaching. Which in itself is not good enough, but the idea of reducing the classroom teaching time is an insult to our children.

>>

>> Why are we being penalised further by only potentially receiving 1.5 days, due to the shape of the class rooms? Available teachers?

>> I have serious concerns about our children's education going forward.

>>

>> Of course I understand the current limitations due to the pandemic, but surely [redacted] council can find alternative ways to ensure the children receive more class time?

>>

>> Potential solutions maybe using alternative buildings in [redacted]? [redacted], are to name just a few and are currently sitting empty.

>>

>> The gym hall could be used as a classroom? The open plan space between the classrooms could be used? The gym hall doesn't even need to be used as a dinner hall, children could bring in or be issued with a packed lunch which they eat at their desk. This would free up another space in the dining hall to be used.

>>

>> Nursery classes could be moved out to local centres freeing up the space for the primary children?

>>

>> Annexes or temporary buildings could be dropped at [redacted] and used. We have seen this used at [redacted] during the extension / rebuild. Of course this is added expense. Surely this should be given serious consideration?

>>

>> We have been told the children won't receive teaching from their proposed new teacher anyway, how about employing more relief teachers? Teaching assistants? Asking the parents to help out? I would be more than happy to help out on my days off, if it benefits our children. As would other parents I know.

>>

>> I just mean there are other options to explore, and if it means the council spending money, then surely this is more than worthwhile?

>>

>> [redacted] is doing something very similar to the above ideas. We know the reputation [redacted] within Scotland when it comes to education. Why should we be any different?

>>

>> I have worked right through this pandemic, as a front line healthcare worker. We have had to change our practice overnight, and if anything this pandemic, has made us rethink everything about the way we work.

>>

>> Maybe it's about time the education system was revised, for the better, thinking outside the box, to help develop and progress our children as best we can.

>

> I have contacted [redacted] council directly, they responded saying it was to do with Scottish government funding and to contact yourself.

>>

>> I wish this matter to be taken seriously, this is our children's futures at stake.

>>

>> Kind Regards

>>

>>

Sent from my iPhone

9 June - DFM

From: Mairi Gougeon MSP <Mairi.gougeon@parliament.scot>

Sent: 09 June 2020 14:23

To: Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills <DFMCSE@gov.scot>

Subject: FW: Schools and nurseries (Case Ref: ME3106)

Dear Deputy First Minister,

Mairi Gougeon MSP has been contacted by her constituent [redacted] concerning the phased easing of restrictions . [redacted] writes "I am concerned the SNP are now starting to get people back to work, but are not reopening the schools and nursery's at the same time. the only date we have been given is for schools to re-open after the summer holidays, but then only part time.

I am currently furloughed and my [redacted] is working from home. I work in the [redacted] , which is starting to re-open. As you have not reopened the schools and nurseries, I will not be able to return to work as I will have to look after my children, who should be in nursery and at school.

When my employer requests I come back to work I will not be able to do so. What will happen? Will I lose my job? Will I continue to receive furlough money? (I will not be furloughed as I have been requested to return to work) Can you please raise my concerns and I ask you to fully consider how you are returning people to work; we cannot go back to work unless you reopen childcare for us!"

I should be obliged if you could address [redacted] concerns. I look forward to your response.

Yours sincerely,

[redacted]

Office of Mairi Gougeon MSP

9 June – DFM

From: [redacted]

Sent: 09 June 2020 08:46

To: Swinney J (John), MSP <John.Swinney.msp@parliament.scot>; Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills <DFMCSE@gov.scot>

Cc: MacDonald G (Gordon), MSP <Gordon.MacDonald.msp@parliament.scot>; [redacted]

Subject: Fwd: Schools - purported science supporting no return to Schools pre-August 2020

Dear Mr Swinney,

While you are not my constituency MSP, given the seriousness of the information requested on the Scottish Government's purported science supposedly justifying a minimum 144 consecutive day school closure for most children in Scotland and the lack of dialogue with my constituency MSP, I feel I have no option but to send a copy of my correspondence to you in your capacity as Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills.

You have a choice; you can engage with me so I can better understand the decision you have made regarding Scotland's children or you can ignore me. My argument concerns the impact of your decision on the most disadvantaged children in Scotland. When you read the correspondence below, I trust you will engage with me rather than ignoring me, as you seem to have done with regard to the welfare of Scotland's most disadvantaged children.

There was no excuse for not keeping flexibility over a partial, staggered return for some primary school children in Scotland if up-to-date science allowed. Instead, it appears from the facts that you caved into the trade unions and have provided, at best, disingenuous science to justify your decision.

Yours sincerely,

[redacted]

On Fri, Jun 5, 2020 at 6:21 PM [redacted] wrote:

Dear Mr Macdonald,

In the absence of any communication from you since our telephone conversation on 24 May 2020, I am minded to submit a freedom of information request to the Scottish Government regarding the matters set out. Nevertheless, I thought it fair to give you a further opportunity to consider this and raise it with the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills.

All Scottish children but, most importantly, the most disadvantaged children in our country deserve to know why the Scottish Government (the “**SG**”) did not retain maximum flexibility over a partial return of schools before the end of the 2020 summer term. Central to understanding that question are the assumptions behind the science issued by the Scottish Government on 26 May 2020 (“Coronavirus (COVID-19): Scientific evidence on schools and ELC settings”) (the “**Science Paper**”).

With regard to Annex A of the Science Paper (“**Annex A**”) there is a noticeable lack of information about the supporting assumptions so:

- What assumption was given to the number of children returning to Primary Schools in Scotland on 1 June 2020?
- What assumption was given to the number of children returning to Primary Schools in Scotland on 13 August 2020?

The Science Paper is presented to the Scottish public on the basis of a like-for-like comparison between 1 June 2020 and 13 August 2020 so the underlying assumptions should be the same for both dates otherwise the like-for-like comparison will be inherently misleading.

Assuming a like-for-like comparison, what the Science Paper should have done is taken account of the fact that the SG will be assuming that most children (excluding assumptions for normal levels of absence and shielding children etc) attend school on a staggered basis from 11 August 2020 whereas the assumptions for 1 June 2020 should assume, on the basis of a return to school being voluntary, that say half the children will not return to school based on parent/carer preferences.

In other words, the SG appears to have a fatal flaw in its comparison by assuming like-for-like attendances for 1 June 2020 and 13 August 2020 when clearly a discount factor of say, 50%, should have been applied to the 1 June 2020 staggered attendance level against the 13 August 2020 staggered attendance level (“**Incorrect Assumption 1**”).

Also please confirm what assumptions are made with regard to staggering of any children attending primary schools at any one time?

Further the Science Paper (using data up to 8 May 2020) assumed:

- over 25,000 persons in Scotland with COVID-19 on 16 May 2020;
- around 18,000 persons in Scotland with COVID-19 on 1 June 2020.

However, on 28 May 2020, the First Minister stated there were in fact only an estimated 19,000 persons in Scotland with COVID -19 as at 22 May 2020 (a 6,000plus improvement upon the information provided by the SG only 44 hours earlier).

Then, on 4 June 2020, the SG published an update stating that an estimated 11,500 persons in Scotland had COVID-19 as at 29 May 2020.

So, three days before 1 June 2020, the number of people estimated to have COVID-19 in Scotland is more than 36% lower than the assumption used to support the Science Paper (“**Incorrect Assumption 2**”).

I would like to understand what the confidence range for R would have been on 1 June 2020 if:

-Incorrect Assumption 1 had been corrected by applying a discount factor of 50% to the staggered number of children attending school on 1 June 2020; and

-

-Incorrect Assumption 2 had been corrected by applying 11,500 persons rather than 18,000 person having COVID-19 in Scotland.

It is not inconceivable that, taking account of the above, the confidence range as at 1 June will be lower (so better) than the confidence range for 13 August 2020 on which the SG has based its return to school policy.

I am not a scientist, but further discrepancies in Annex A appear to show the contempt that the SG has towards parents, children and teachers over this matter:

- the Science Paper covers secondary schools as well as ELC and primary schools, but Annex A only covers ELC and primary schools according to its title. Prima facia, the SG has published no supporting scientific evidence whatsoever with regard to secondary schools despite being clear in its press release on 21 May 2020 that it would release scientific data “shortly”.
- why given the importance of accurate data and the SG intending children to return in a staggered manner from 11 August 2020 has the SG not bothered to model on the basis of 11 August 2020?
- Annex A indicates that “it would be safer to make limited changes **initially at the start of June and examine its effects** (my bold added). The options that are lowest risk would be those with restricted numbers of children (e.g. transition years)...”

Given the SG’s own science (and notwithstanding the inaccuracies attaching to it outlined above) what steps has the SG taken to facilitate “limited changes initially at the start of June”?

Given that the Education Continuity Order dated 21 May 2020 (the “**Order**”) issued by the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills, the answer to that has to be nothing with respect to primary schools other than the existing support for key worker and vulnerable children because the Order prohibits any local authority from allowing any other primary children into schools. How then can any “effects” be “examined”?

- the last paragraph of Annex A is also enlightening:

“There is ... scope in the overall R in Scotland to **fully open** (my bold added) ELC settings and primary schools in June, but that would mean a significant risk ...”.

It has never been the case about looking for primary schools to “fully open”. If in fact the confidence range has been calculated with no “staggering” and “fully reopening” there is a further misrepresentation from the SG is telling the Scottish people.

All the above points to the need to remain adaptable to change as the science around COVID-19 evolves, something which, to be fair to the SG, has been a consistent message across many of its policies around COVID-19. It beggars belief as to why that flexibility has not been afforded in respect of some form of return to school before the summer holidays if the science supported it at the time.

The press release of the Educational Institute of Scotland dated 15 May 2020 provides the answer; the Scottish Government caved into the trade unions rather than retaining flexibility for Scotland's children. That is shameful. And what makes it worse is that the most disadvantaged children in our society will suffer most from a minimum 144 day out of school Scottish Government policy purportedly supported by disingenuous and out of date scientific information.

Let us hope we can make progress on getting answers to the above questions early next week.

Yours sincerely,

[redacted]

10 June – DFM

From: [redacted]

Sent: 10 June 2020 12:20

To: Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills <DFMCSE@gov.scot>

Subject: FW: [redacted] Schools

Dear John

Please refer to the email below from [redacted]

.

As you can see [redacted] has taken some time to set out [redacted] thoughts and views in a coherent and fairly comprehensive fashion. I have since engaged with [redacted] on this, and we had met previously at a rural leadership course.

I am sure that [redacted] would greatly appreciate your considered response.

I appreciate your thoughts on this matter.

Kind regards,



Fergus Ewing MSP

Member of Scottish Parliament for Inverness and Nairn

Scottish Government Cabinet Secretary for Rural Economy

Office of Fergus Ewing MSP, 112 Church Street, Inverness, IV1 1EP

Telephone: 01463 713 004



On 6 Jun 2020, at 11:08, [redacted] wrote:

Good Morning,

I write to you, to outline, and ask for your understanding of some of the issues being faced by working families during this crisis. It is becoming apparent, that the feeling in rural areas, particularly, is one that the government don't seem to be listening to the concerns of the greater public.

It's time to invest. The future generation of NHS workers and KEY workers need your help.

After starting to ease some lockdown restrictions, it is clear that the mood within the general public is pretty low. People are struggling to overcome the fact that the lockdown ease is not quite as beneficial as they first realised. In part due to the lack of ability to really go anywhere, and secondly, due to the fact the weather isn't really good enough to enjoy sitting outside. The differences across the country are frustrating, and it is encouraging divisive behaviour and attitudes among the public.

As a parent of [redacted] children in school and one in [redacted], a business owner and a qualified teacher, I am concerned about the fact that there seems to be a level of 'fear' being encouraged by the government, thus encouraging people to judge others and really worry about a virus, that they have very little chance of either catching or dying from.

There have been talks of some schools making three year plans for blended learning, and others who talk of children being part time until Christmas. Some councils have encouraged parental feedback on an options basis, in order to gather real information on how people feel and what parents need. Other councils are claiming to consult parents, but in reality, those on the ground aren't seeing anything like that and these big decisions that affect the daily lives of families, aren't being consulted upon.

1400 hospital patients were moved into Nursing homes at the start of this virus, without any testing in place. Hospitals were cleared of patients, most places becoming ghost towns. That's 1400 patients, which for some reason, the government couldn't provide care for prior to the arrival of Coronavirus. Suddenly, there was space for them in carehomes. Why was this exactly? We knew from the outset that the elderly were the most vulnerable.

It's a point I won't dwell on, but I think most people understand that if this hadn't of happened – Scotland wouldn't have the death rate that we have today. The reason I bring this up – is that, because of this move, our children are now suffering because the death rate has ensued fear and unrest in households across the country.

Mental health statistics in Scotland are very poor indeed.

The suicide rate in Scotland in 2018 was 784. That increased by 15% from 2017. At the time of writing, this equated to 35% of the registered covid 19 deaths this year.

Over the weekend, there have been many social media accounts of teenagers socialising on beaches and secluded areas of the highlands. Many people outraged that this is going on. Are we surprised? These teenagers have nothing else to do. They are bored. You know what would keep them from being bored? Going to school. An environment where social distancing can be encouraged. Suicide is a particularly big problem in Highland and the coronavirus lockdown restrictions are ultimately going to contribute to this problem. More unemployment, more

homelessness, more domestic violence and more mental health struggles as families find the pressures too difficult.

Families are losing money on flights to foreign countries because businesses like BA are telling them it's safe to travel, yet they have restrictions on how many times you can visit the toilet, and won't be serving food. So if BA deem it safe for children to board a 7 hour transatlantic flight, sharing the same airspace as potentially vulnerable co-passengers, why is it that we cannot deem it safe for children to go to school, where we have adequate sanitary facilities?

By announcing plans for blended learning, where children are potentially going to be off school for more than 50% of the time, you are forcing working parents to choose from the following childcare options;

1. Use grandparents, who may be vulnerable
2. Use a hub (currently not available to those who aren't key workers)
3. Use a friend, who have their own children
4. Give up work

I'm sure that you can see the potholes in each of these options.

Over the years the government have worked hard to implement schemes where by mothers, in particular, are encouraged to return to work. The funded hours childcare is something that enables many families to have both parents working, paying tax and contributing to the economy. For many mothers, this return to work enables them to regain a sense of personal identity, rather than just 'being a mum'.

There has been a lot of work into gender pay equality and encouraging a level playing field between men and women in the workplace, however at this point, by only facilitating half of the children at a time, the government are directly impacting the female workforce. Businesses cannot afford to have members of staff who are unable to work on the pay roll, particularly if their industry has been impacted by lockdown. Members of staff, who have childcare issues, are going to be disadvantaged in the scope of redundancy selection as a result of the decision to keep schools part time.

Surely it is time for the Government to step forward and invest in the next generation. To ensure the councils can provide adequate education for ALL families, not just those children of key workers, who mostly, aren't in the position of being made redundant.

There have been claims that children won't fall behind in education – because we are all in the same boat. Except, we are not. We are not in the same boat as other countries, who have manage to return to some form of education rather sooner, in relative terms than us. The children in most other countries around the world, are returning to school now, not in 3 months time. They are at least getting some learning and mental health reparation this integration and stimulus from peers, I'm sure you will agree, is invaluable.

You will be aware of the long term decline in the Numeracy results in Scotland, and I know this is very much an ongoing concern being addressed across the country by local councils and teachers. Closing the attainment gap has been something that has been a focus. If there had been any advances made in these areas – they will be retracted by the time full time education resumes.

The science has shown that children are not in the vulnerable category in this crisis. We need to shield to vulnerable members of society. I am not suggesting that we return to normal, but what I am suggesting, is that you put the money into providing the education that our children deserve, and for all children, so that the businesses can get the economy going again.

How many supply teachers are currently sitting waiting on a call to work? I am sure that you are aware, that the rate of qualification, and the rate of retirement, haven't correlated over the last decade, and therefore you will find many teachers currently sitting with no contract to answer to. Have you contacted them? Have you any indication of how many could potentially come and help? I am registered with the GTCS, and I can tell you, I have had not one communication to ask if I am happy to return to the classroom and help our children resume some normality.

Without a strong economy, where will education be in a decade? We have already experienced massive budget cuts to PSA time and supply hours, even a freeze on being able to attend Continuing Professional Development for teachers. Now, more than ever, I call on you to step up for the education of our next generation and give them what they deserve. A full time education, with Teachers who have the time and cover to attend much needed CPD. CPD which could have helped those teachers who were struggling to adapt to a new more technical way of delivering education. It is apparent that many teachers have had to work tirelessly during this pandemic to get up to speed with the technical opportunities of the likes of google classroom and Seesaw. Maybe if there hadn't been so many cuts to education over the last few years – these teachers, and children for that matter, would have breezed the blended learning model? Our children are now paying for an underfunded education system, at the hands of the Scottish Government.

I call upon you to step up the testing. Step up the investment. Invest in the future of our country. Invest in the safe return to school for ALL children. You must make sure there is sufficient budget to cover for the staffing required to meet the demands being set.

Test everyone. Do it regularly. Not just those with symptoms. If the problem is asymptomatic carriers, test everyone. Test the children.

Can you tell me, what are the circumstances that need to be apparent before the schools return to normal? Is the blended learning model going to be for the indefinite future? Parents need to be able to plan to return to work, and at this stage, not even teachers can outline what days they can work - because they cannot plan for the care of their own children.

What is the R number in [redacted]? I would be really interested to know, because the science would suggest that without the mis management of the care home in [redacted] the R number in [redacted] has never been close to what it was elsewhere.

Looking forward to your response.

Regards,

[redacted]

10 June - DFM

Dear Joe, FitzPatrick (MSP)

As you will be aware, by the time schools begin their partial reopening in August the vast majority of Scotland's 700,000 school children will not have attended school for five months. I now understand from communication with my local schools that reopening in August will be partial at best with children receiving approximately half a week of contact in every three weeks. Furthermore, there are no clear commitments regarding how and when contact hours will be increased. There is thus a high likelihood that Scotland's children will continue to have their education disrupted for a total of 9 months or more. This will have serious negative impacts on the life chances of all pupils with those from already disadvantaged backgrounds suffering the worst consequences. Clearly this shouldn't be tolerated in a society that professes to provide opportunity for all. We have seen from the debacle in the English education system that social distancing and infection control quite rightly prevents schools from fully reopening. However, given the significant impact that control of the Covid-19 pandemic is having on Scottish education it is time for the government not simply to take a laissez-faire, wait and see approach but to introduce imaginative initiatives to ensure that school children receive the education that they deserve. This could and should include the use of additional spaces (e.g. the many hotels and conference centres that currently sit idle) and the recruitment of additional people with the capacity to help provide an adequate curriculum. I would appreciate if you raise these questions in Holyrood and look forward to the Scottish Government taking the education of the nation's children more seriously. Surely the full-time opening of schools should be of the highest priority for a government that recognises the need to ensure opportunity for all of the population. Your faithfully,
[redacted]

10 June – DFM

From: [redacted]

Sent: 10 June 2020 11:47

To: Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills <DFMCSE@gov.scot>

Subject: Teacher Query

Some colleagues and I have concerns regarding returning to work.

Firstly, the Scottish Government continually go on about reducing the attainment gap therefore how can it possibly be acceptable for some schools to work on a 5 days basis, others on a two day basis and bigger schools on only a day and a half model. My colleagues and I feel that this is putting some children at an unfair advantage and will only further increase the attainment gap.

I understand that some colleagues who will be working on a two model have explained that in their schools, a Wednesday morning will be used for pupil support/vulnerable children. What about the bigger schools where there are many support issues? Does this mean once again, these children are at a disadvantage?

Can I also clarify the Scottish Government's position on meetings? We were told that if there are no children in school, then a [Wednesday](#) morning could be used for meetings. We feel that, once again, this is completely unfair as we would have to attend meetings after school, meaning more childcare issues.

Finally, could you explain why teachers were not consulted on the schools holidays? We were surprised yesterday to see a list of proposed holiday dates which mentioned a holiday in February, we were of the understanding that the extra days were going to be at the end of June.

I understand that these issues are not present in [redacted], as it seems to be completely inconsistent across and within all local authorities in Scotland, resulting in lots of very frustrated and angry teachers and parents.

I completely understand that this has been a difficult time and the organisation of this must be extremely difficult, however I do not feel that the needs of ALL staff and children have been accounted for.

I look forward to your response.

[redacted]

Sent from my iPhone

11 June - DFM

John Swinney Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education & Skills Via e-mail: John.Swinney.msp@parliament.scot

Dear Mr Swinney Coronavirus (Covid-19): strategic framework for reopening schools, early learning and childcare provision

We welcome the publication of this strategy and appreciate all the thought that is going into our children's safe return to school. However, the omission of any reference to Gaelic medium education (GME) in the strategy is concerning to us as parents of children in GME in [redacted]. The proposed use of "a blended model of in-school and in-home learning [that] is reliant on consistent, easy to use in-home learning materials which are intended to support and complement, but not replicate, in-school learning" presents unique challenges for GME. The pedagogy of GME is based on total immersion in Gaelic in the initial years of statutory education. Almost all of the pupils in GME in [redacted] come from non-Gaelic speaking homes and parents have found themselves in a situation where they are trying to support their child's learning through the medium of Gaelic although they themselves have little or no Gaelic. The GME teachers and other organisations have worked incredibly hard to enable parents to do this, but we are all aware of our children losing their Gaelic language skills and of our own limitations. Our children need to be developing their Gaelic skills now, not losing them. We do not know if this will have a knock on negative impact on their educational attainment, but we suspect it will. In order to regain their Gaelic skills, we believe that pupils will need full time immersion from August. It is essential that there is national guidance around GME in the framework. It will be the responsibility of local authorities and schools to plan the implementation of the strategy, but without national guidance we fear a lack of understanding or support at local level may mean GME is neglected. The absence of a national strategy also leaves parents with little or no options for recourse should they be failed by their local authority or school. We understand that this crisis has put pressure on all aspects of our education system, but this does not excuse the exclusion of GME from this framework. The main risk of the lack of reference to GME in national guidance is that the current crisis will have a disproportionate and long-term negative impact on GME, and this is unacceptable. The revival and survival of Gaelic in Scotland is inextricably linked to the success of GME. Conversely, a clear national strategy for recovery will help ensure that GME continues to grow and flourish as an important and valued component of the Scottish education system.

Yours sincerely

Parents and carers of children in [redacted]

11 June - DFM

From: GRAY, Neil <neil.gray.mp@parliament.uk> Sent: 11 June 2020 15:55 To: parliamentaryenquiries@northlan.gov.uk; Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills <DFMCSE@gov.scot> Subject: Neil Gray MP Enquiry – [redacted]

Dear [redacted] and John, I am writing to you both on behalf of my constituent [redacted] of the above address, with regards to the concerns and suggestions [redacted] has regarding blended learning. I have attached the letter I received from [redacted] which outlines these concerns in full, and offers some suggestions as to how [redacted] feels this system may work better. I would appreciate if you could both read over this letter and outline how the Council and the Scottish Government plan to ensure that this system works as well as it can for pupils, parents, and teachers. I look forward to hearing from you soon. Kind regards, Neil Neil Gray MP

Attachment

[redacted]

Good afternoon,

I'm writing this e-mail to ensure you receive feedback from a concerned parent, I have had sight of the plans for getting [redacted] schools opened in August, and can see lots of considerations have been made for the health and safety of teachers and pupils alike, which is commendable.

As far as I am aware the children will return to school for 2 days per week for face to face learning and the other 3 days per week they will continue with your home learning approach. As a parent I have deep concerns about the lack of structure put in to home learning and from my perspective there needs to be an **official full-time weekly timetable** set as it would normally be. Having a timetable provides structure and guidance to pupils and parents and creates a shift in mind-set from don't worry you don't need to do work, to this is the new norm this is school, it will also support pupils to organise themselves, prioritise their work and ensure engagement in their course work.

Some of the sticking points we have felt;

- No structure to the week/days, parents and children having to try and work out their own timetables,
 - I have found this more challenging with my high school age [redacted]
 - Departments uploading work with lots of varying time allocated to each task
 - Mixed deadlines, one week, fortnight, 10 weeks! Which means I have to almost make a mini project plan to do this
- **inconsistency in the structure of allocating work** from different departments,
 - some departments will upload a document once a week and provide good instructions explaining how to complete the work
 - other departments don't load anything at all, leave it to the kids/parent to troll through folders to find it

- school work is posted to different areas in Microsoft teams which at times are not dated or titled well
- We've had very **poor communication** from the leadership at our [redacted]schools, I have provided feedback to the school directly ([redacted])
 - our kids left school on the 22nd of March and we have had no official personal communication from either school's leadership team
 - (until yesterday 11/06/2020 [redacted]sent something out)
 - **NO virtual** class/subject chats, no check-ins, no assemblies, no contact with the leadership team for the kids
 - some schools in [redacted] seem to be doing really well with this
 - Random stuff on Twitter is not good enough, not everyone uses it and also they do not reply to questions etc.
- No **communication of strategy** and how the home schooling links to the kids broad general education
 - has the last 3 months been written off, will the work be recovered, how will my kids make sure they are keeping up

I can't be alone in working full-time through the pandemic, some shifts starting at 7am and not finishing to 3pm, my [redacted] is working from home, but 60% of [redacted]team are furloughed on 80% salary [redacted] focussing on keeping [redacted]job and doing other people work- [redacted]doesn't have the time to sit with the kids every day and help them navigate all these issues stated, now I feel that my kids may have fallen behind.

I've had to speak to my work (I work in the public sector and we don't have laptops to hand out) so I can organise working from home at least 3 days a week in August because I have absolutely no confidence on how home schooling looks.

As a starter for 10 here are some of my thoughts;

- A structured timetable for the full school week (face 2 face & home schooling)
- Home schooling work needs to have clear guidance
- Clear, concise and consistent way of uploading/accessing the digital learning assignments
- Weekly/fortnightly communication, how things are going, what's working well, not so well
- Feedback for parents and pupils, are the digital/home learning assignments/work being completed

I know this may feel like a personal attack on the teachers, I know they have worked tirelessly throughout the pandemic, and our education system is not set up for this learning approach, but if this is our new normal we need to give our kids what they deserve, the best brilliantly easy approach to the next academic year.

Kind regards
[redacted]

11 June – DFM

From: [redacted]

Sent: 11 June 2020 21:06

To: 'Private - Russell MW (Michael), MSP' <[redacted]> **Cc:** Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills <DFMCSE@gov.scot>

Subject: Schools again

Good Evening Michael

Having just attended an online parent meeting I was shocked to be told that the suggested blended learning model could be in place till December. At that point our children will have missed $\frac{3}{4}$ of the school year. On top of that I was also informed that, contrary to earlier reports, my [redacted] child is very unlikely to get any sort of in school experience before the summer to aid with her transition to High school.

I know I have emailed you about this before, but we are getting to a crisis point. It does not seem that children are being considered in this at all. They have been shown to be low risk in catching/being very ill from COVID 19, there is also a large body of evidence to suggest that they are not even particularly high transmitters of the virus. As was reported in the press this week, they have more chance of being run over on the school run or being hit by lightning than catching this virus. How can the Scottish Govt continue with this policy when there is clear evidence that:

- 1. Social distancing measures in schools are not proportionate to the low risk of the virus in children.**
- 2. The proposed measures for school openings will compound and extend the harm from the negative impact of closures.**
- 3. Decades of social research show social distancing measures do more harm than good to children's well-being.**
- 4. Such measures will further deepen and entrench existing inequities in our society.**

Nothing about this approach is about the best interests of our children and I implore you to stand up for the children in your constituency. I disagree with this approach as a whole in Scotland, but in particular in our area where our schools are less densely populated, we are naturally isolated and have seen minimal cases of Covid 19.

Regards

[redacted]

12 June - DFM

Dear John, I have received a letter from a constituent regarding the Scottish Government's plans for children to return to school. My constituent, [redacted] is concerned that, in light of the statistically few cases amongst children, failure to ensure children return to full-time education will have an adverse effect on children's learning, add stress for working parents and impact on family members' mental health. [redacted] is also concerned that blended learning, particularly where the child attends a childcare facility when not at school, is likely to lead to greater contact amongst children and adults, and therefore increase the risk of cross infection, than if children attended school full-time. Could you tell me on what basis the Scottish Government decided on blended, part - time, education rather than return to full- time education? Does the concept of blended learning as a means of reducing or containing transmission of Covid-19 rely on the assumption that children will be at home rather than a childcare facility? Was any modelling done of this and alternative scenarios, within the context of likely spread of Covid-19? Could you also tell me if any consideration was given to the likelihood of increased transmission of the disease when children attended school and childcare, given that they would have contact with different groups of children and adults, with different attendance patterns and all of whom would have multiple different contacts? If so, why is attendance at two different establishments on a part-time basis deemed less risky than attendance at school on a full- time basis? I look forward to your reply. Neil Neil Bibby MSP West Scotland

12 June - DFM

From: [redacted]

Sent: 11 June 2020 12:14

To: Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills

<DFMCSE@gov.scot>

Subject: Letter from Ben Macpherson MSP

Please see the attached letter sent from Ben Macpherson MSP, in his constituency capacity.

[redacted]

Attachment:

Dear John Supporting children and young people though the school return [redacted]I was recently contacted by my constituent, [redacted]. [redacted]has [redacted]children, one in [redacted] and one [redacted]. [redacted] says [redacted]is fortunate in that [redacted] [redacted] are in position to support their children at this challenging time. Additionally, [redacted] is grateful to the schools and the teachers for their efforts in producing online material for distance learning. However, [redacted] is concerned that, when the schools go back on the 11th August, most children will have been without any direct teacher interaction for more than 5 months. My constituent's concern is, despite best efforts of teachers, pupils and parents, that remote learning is in no way comparable to school-based learning. Moreover, my constituent is concerned that, such is the lack of interaction up until now, it is problematic to accurately measure where children are, against where they would be in a normal year. Therefore, [redacted] says that we should presume to act as if there are serious gaps to address. [redacted]feels that the Scottish education system needs a systematic plan to address these gaps. Without such a plan, my constituent is afraid that this will mean that children, especially those in S4, will end up with a significantly reduced quality and experience of education. [redacted] feels that this would be a lasting scar for a great many able students. [redacted]would like the Scottish Government to consider various options for such a plan including: summer schools; finding a way of enabling video conferencing or other means of supporting daily pupil/teacher interaction; finding extra teaching resource – for example by following the model which was done in the NHS and calling on students/retirees; and providing funding for schools and teachers for extra resources Further, I am aware that [redacted] are in the middle of ongoing school recovery discussions, with different models of blended learning being considered. This includes discussions around improving the home learning aspect and related issues, such as digital learning, which they feel will need addressed and resourced. Can you provide any clarity about strategies in this area, which can be shared with my constituent? Many thanks for considering my constituent's concerns and in advance for your response Kind regards, Ben Macpherson MSP

12 June – DFM

Dear Mr Swinney I'm emailing you in the hope that you get to read this and that my point of view is taken into consideration. Regarding the ongoing closure of schools and the phased reopening along with continued home learning due to the ongoing Coronavirus situation, I wish to make several points which I hope won't be disregarded. My [redacted] is currently a pupil in [redacted], albeit the year has ended abruptly for all pupils other than the children of key workers. While I appreciate that school teachers have done a fabulous job and continue to try to manage home learning for the children as well as deal with their own childcare issues, the home learning is absolutely no substitute for the lessons the children would and in my opinion should be having in school. I understand fully that social distancing needs to take place but surely there are other buildings that can be used for the learning experience to allow our children's education to continue? Given that most studies show that children are at very low risk to the virus, I feel the measures that have been taken and will continue to be taken are extreme and will most certainly be detrimental in the longer term to their achievements and progress. I also understand that science is still evolving and it's unclear whether children are carriers even although they may not be affected at all with the virus. However, I can't understand why their education has had to be disrupted to the extent that it has as anyone in the vulnerable groups can and should remain shielded. We are all aware that the virus may be here for some time to come, so on that basis is it feasible to disrupt the education of our children for as long as the virus is here? Are we talking about this disruption continuing well into next year? At what cost is this to our children's mental health and social wellbeing? My point is that surely everything in life carries an element of risk, even when we step out the door in the morning we are putting ourselves at risk. We need to get a balance and that risk needs to be measured against the detrimental effects of locking our children away and denying them the chance to make progress and be the best they can be in life. Is this going to be the generation who lost out because we chose to be overcautious? Even when the schools do return in August, it will be for two days per week, this is horrifying and makes me so incredibly worried. If parents make the decision not to send their children back to school, I respect their viewpoint but I'm willing to take the risk as I think it's a very low one if all things considered. I want my child to get the education [redacted] needs and deserves because I haven't read anything about how those in authority are planning for our children to catch up with the many months of schooling they will lose. I would appreciate your views on this. Kind Regards [redacted]

12 June - DFM

From: Mairi Gougeon MSP <Mairi.gougeon@parliament.scot>

Sent: 12 June 2020 12:51

To: Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills <DFMCSE@gov.scot>

Subject: FW: COVID19 Advice (Case Ref: ME3110)

Good afternoon

I have been asked by the constituent below to forward to your their email as below.

I look forward to your response.

Kind regards

Office of Mairi Gougeon MSP

From: [redacted]

Sent: 10 June 2020 09:43

To: Gougeon M (Mairi), MSP

Subject: COVID19 Advice

I am writing to you to voice my concerns regarding the advice being issued:

to the public
to teachers

I am a [redacted], and have received a copy of the guidance document from SSERC relating to the return to schools in August. I am a little disturbed by the document not being representative of the advice being issued everyday by the First Minister at her daily briefings.

SSERC (Scottish Schools Equipment Research Centre) markets itself as the Scottish Government appointed safety body for Scottish Schools.

Throughout its most recent publication regarding returning to schools, a number of statements are made which are at direct odds with Scottish Government advice.

<https://www.sserc.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Science-Tech-return-to-school.pdf><https://eur03.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.sserc.org.uk%2Fwp-content%2Fuploads%2F2020%2F06%2FScience-Tech-return-to-school.pdf&data=02%7C01%7CMairi.Gougeon.msp%40parliament.scot%7Cb72744e6cf9648bb7cae08d80d1a5f94%7Cd603c99ccfdd4292926800db0d0cf081%7C1%7C1%7C637273754214454040&sd ata=PhRmUvaJ8QztyEv766BulCAEzSLcGha036twDBmk2Tw%3D&reserved=0>

The Scottish Government has published the following:

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-safer-work-places-statement/><https://eur03.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.gov.scot%2Fpublications%2Fcoronavirus-covid-19-safer-work-places-statement%2F&data=02%7C01%7CMairi.Gougeon.msp%40parliament.scot%7Cb72744e6cf9648bb7cae08d80d1a5f94%7Cd603c99ccfdd4292926800db0d0cf081%7C1%7C1%7C637273754214464037&sd ata=fBGnUuGoW1EsA%2BVCexFC23YuTrxGux8oQNXGSvS3RuY%3D&reserved=0>

“It is important that employers understand that they already have statutory duties towards their employees, for example, to put in place measures to keep workers safe. During the pandemic, this includes taking steps to help people work from home where they can do their job in this way, providing handwashing and hygiene procedures in line with guidance, and taking steps to maintain a minimum 2-metre distance between people in the workplace. The Scottish Government and the regulators will ensure that there is effective advice and guidance in place to support employers meet these obligations.”

This is where my concern for the 2m rule comes from. From the SSERC H&S courses I have attended, we are employees of a local authority so they must make arrangements to keep us safe. But pupils, when in our classroom, are also considered employees and we have a responsibility to keep them safe. This is applied for risk assessments for procedures or practical. There is no reason to assume the HSE would not apply the same rule here.

At the moment there is a 2m rule, who knows what August will bring? We may be in phase 4 of restrictions, which means no requirement for social distancing. We cannot assume this will be the case OR that advice regarding the 2m rule will change.

Passing in a corridor within 2m is very different to sitting in a classroom for 3 periods together, especially if the air handling units are switched off, as this will significantly alter the pattern of air changes in a room per hour. Switching off air handlers has been suggested and pursued by unions as they are a potential vector for transmission without appropriate filters / paths only from outside into a single room.

Advice to the public issued by the First Minister, 09.06.20, states clearly if social distancing cannot be maintained by at least 2m then face coverings should be worn in enclosed spaces such as supermarkets. The corridors of schools are narrower and more enclosed, with less air flow, than a supermarket aisle. Therefore the advice we are being issued with for schools appears flawed, to say “negligible risk” of transmission if such arrangements are being suggested for out with a school.

WHO guidelines (06.06.20) go further than those stated by the Scottish Government to date, detailing those over 60 or with any underlying health condition (from blood pressure to asthma) should wear medical grade masks in enclosed spaces / where transmission is more likely.

Teachers are, by professional standards, expected to model behaviours that should be carried out by all in society. I am a little disturbed by references to "negligible risk" of going less than 2m to another individual indoors and not from your own household without the need for face coverings. Only today, the First Minister confirmed this should not be happening. WHO guidelines state that wearing face coverings on public transport and enclosed work environments is recommended. Yet, the guidelines issued by what markets itself as the Scottish Government appointed default safety advisors negates to mention this and actually says there is no issue.

This creates a difficult situation for all. The old adage "do as I say, not as I do" comes to mind. Is this yet another example of multiple standards of being expected of the general public and others of the chosen few?

regards

[redacted]

13 June – DFM

From: [redacted]
Sent: 13 June 2020 20:30
To: Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills
<DFMCSE@gov.scot>
Subject: Schools

Dear Mr. Swinney,

I am very concerned about the blended model being presented to us as parent for the start of the new school year in August.

There are a few things I am especially looking for clarity on:

If the R number continues to fall at the rate at which it is falling can we expect the blended model to change to one of all kids back to school in August full time?

If as the science is now showing children are not carriers and it doesn't particularly effect them - can we expect a more common sense approach of hand washing rather than the model of social distancing being offered?

How does the government expect parents to be able to get back to work full time in their jobs if the children are in blended education? Will our jobs be safe guarded?

Are we to be offered financial support to educate our children at home?

How does the Scottish education department see the rebuilding of children's confidence and resilience in a blended education model working?

If the blended model does go ahead in August how long will it be expected to go on for? Given that to date there has never been a vaccine created for a novel coronavirus?

Is the education department going to give a crash course in present Maths and education at primary/secondary level for those parents now having to educate children at home- given that for a lot of us our maths education was 30 years ago and we are not up to date on modern teaching styles? This may of course have an effect on them when school returns and maths is taught a different way?

If say the school were in a tiny village with only 20 children who already live in the same street is the blended model appropriate at all?

Given that at present there are at last count only 4 people in hospital with Covid 19 in Scotland is this blended model not disproportionate to what's actually going on?

My children are both now suffering from this isolation - this is effecting their mental health - as children's clubs are keen to start up can they not be allowed to open their doors for Summer clubs? Can we not have zoos and play parks now re opened? To prepare them mentally for normality starting up again and helping to decrease the fear of other people.

I look forward to your answers!
[redacted]

13 June 2020 - DFM

Good morning

I have been following with great interest the above subject .

Yesterday in particular the media reported parents may have to consider giving up Work and going on benefits to enable them to fit in with the blended model of schooling anticipated for Scotland's children .

I have in the last few days written to our Head of Education in [redacted] and my local MSP The following :

I am contacting you as unsure where I might plant this idea re the above subject.

I am a grandparent , children are in [redacted] , and [redacted], over the past few 10 weeks I have watched my [redacted]juggle working from home in a very demanding job in finance and schooling the children . Our [redacted]is very aware [redacted]is not always able to give the contracted hours and this doesn't sit well with [redacted].

[redacted]also feels [redacted] is not as present at either task as [redacted]should be when is stuck behind a computer screen.

The way forward /plan is asking employers to be flexible as children will have a mix of blended learning.

Is there any way [redacted]Council Education can suggest to the Scottish Government: - Employers could offer employees a reduction in their hours, to enable them to home school , and work , perhaps the government could then top up the salary through the furlough scheme. This would allow employees to retain their normal working salary and have dedicated time to give a more meaningful attempt at home schooling.

[redacted] replies I should take this enquiry to my MSP .

[redacted] replied she would contact the Scottish Government about flexible working and encouraging employers to find solutions for their staff.

I would be grateful if you could keep me up to date with any thoughts the Scottish Government have on this subject .

Should you wish to discuss this any further please do not hesitate to contact me .
[redacted]

13 June – DFM

From: [redacted]

Sent: 13 June 2020 22:34

To: Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills <DFMCSE@gov.scot>

Subject: "Blended Approach" to schools re-opening

Dear Mr Swinney,

I am emailing you due to my increasing concern about the plans for a 'blended approach' in teaching and learning when children return to school in August.

I am a [redacted] and a [redacted] of [redacted] children, [redacted]. In both my capacities as a teacher and as a [redacted], I can't help but feel that children are being spectacularly failed in the current situation. Children have already missed out on months of education, socialisation, transitioning, important life milestones and the carefree joy of playing with their peers without restrictions. And yet, instead of finding relief in their return to school, they are going to be faced with yet more damaging restrictions.

When it comes to my own children, I am well able to keep them up to date with their school work, and although I feel concerned at the long term impact of this pandemic on their learning, social skills and mental health, I know that by and large they will be ok. But I also know, from my professional experience, that many children will not. Some children I have met over the years find the 6 week summer holidays a struggle. They return to school after the break ill equipped to learn, and it takes some weeks or months for their diligent teachers to rehabilitate them and help them to learn again. I can only imagine what this lockdown period has been like for those children, and how hard it will be for teachers to tap into their learning capacity again. How on earth are they supposed to achieve this when children will only be in school for approximately one week in every three? What standard of learning do you expect these children to receive during the many days they will be at home, rather than in the classroom?

Even for those children who are not vulnerable, I see many problems and pitfalls with the planned approach. For Nursery and P1 age pupils, I anticipate that the new school set up will be particularly harmful. Ordinarily in schools these children are taught to socialise, to share space, to share equipment, to play games, to love handling books, to have sensory experiences, to turn to each other for comfort if they feel scared, to navigate busy playgrounds, to be independent and hands on learners. Instead, they will be taught to stay apart, to keep their possessions to themselves, and to exist in small, insular groups. I worry greatly about the long term repercussions of such measures - might we one day come to regret the insistence on social distancing for such young children? Particularly when children are largely unaffected by Covid 19 anyway?

Another group of children who will struggle greatly are those with additional needs. Children with autism, ADHD and OCD (although that is not an exhaustive list) will have their anxieties and difficulties compounded by the fear that will inevitably accompany such drastic changes to their school life. It won't matter how kind the teachers are, or how many games they try to play to make social distancing seem fun, or how hard their parents try to keep up their home learning; children are very perceptive, and will understand the fear and caution implicit in these measures.

In summary, I would like to know how long you are expecting this 'blended approach' in sterile, socially distanced school settings to go on for? At what point will enough be enough? How can we ensure that children are not being let down for much longer? All children - but especially children with additional needs, vulnerable children, and those who struggle academically - are going to feel the impact of the decision not to resume school as normal in August. I strongly question whether that decision is the right one in the long term.

Yours Sincerely,

[redacted]

13 June – DFM

From: [redacted]

Sent: 22 June 2020 13:03

To: Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills
<DFMCSE@gov.scot>

Subject: DEREK MACKAY MSP: Education Concerns

Dear Cabinet Secretary

Derek Mackay MSP has been contacted by his constituent [redacted] who is very concerned about the “blended learning” approach which the Scottish Government have taken. [redacted] given [redacted] consent for [redacted] comments to be passed to the Scottish Government for response. [redacted] has advised that [redacted] is grateful for the reassurance there has been from the First Minister since [redacted] initial correspondence attached below this e-mail.

Kind regards.

[redacted]

[redacted]

Constituency Office: 0141-885-2076 37 Hairst Street, Renfrew, PA4 8QU

[redacted]



Before you print think about the ENVIRONMENT

From: [redacted]

Sent: 13 June 2020 10:45

To: Mackay D (Derek), MSP <Derek.Mackay.msp@parliament.scot>; Bibby N (Neil), MSP <Neil.Bibby.msp@parliament.scot>; Fee M (Mary), MSP <Mary.Fee.msp@parliament.scot>; Corry M (Maurice), MSP <Maurice.Corry.msp@parliament.scot>; Golden M (Maurice), MSP <Maurice.Golden.msp@parliament.scot>; Greene J (Jamie), MSP <Jamie.Greene.msp@parliament.scot>; Greer R (Ross), MSP <Ross.Greer.msp@parliament.scot>

Subject: Education Concerns

Good Morning

I write to express my grave concern about the crisis in education that now faces our children and young people as a result of the Scottish Government’s response to the Covid 19 pandemic.

I will preface this by stating that I appreciate this pandemic has presented huge and unprecedented challenges, the scale and circumstances of which could not have been foreseen even a few short months ago. It was right at that time that measures were taken, including the closure of schools, to suppress the epidemic and given the subsequent rapidly falling numbers

of infections, hospitalisations and deaths, the people of Scotland, including our children and young people, have risen more than admirably to the challenge.

It is now clear however that the Scottish Government has decided that the best that can be done, even after what will be five months of suppression measures by the time schools return in August, is part time schooling, or a so called 'blended learning' approach. I was shocked back in April when I saw John Swinney on TV being interviewed about schools returning, and he said then he 'couldn't see' schools going back full time in August. This seemed to me to be unduly pessimistic and wholly lacking in ambition for our children and young people given that at that time infection rates were already falling and there was another four months to go before the end of the school holidays. I believe most parents had already accepted, albeit with resignation, that once schools closed in March that they would not return before summer. I myself believe that it is the correct decision for schools to remain closed until this time.

Parents have been struggling since March with attempting to home school their children, this presents varying challenges I am sure and for no two parents the situation will be the same – however, for example supporting young primary aged children who cannot yet work independently, and assisting students in the middle and senior stages of secondary school studying subjects at a higher level of knowledge than the parents might have themselves are two such examples – in many cases whilst also attempting to work from home. That this now has to continue for an indeterminate period from August defies belief and is quite simply appalling and an abject failure of the learners of Scotland. Additionally, it is all very well for Mr Swinney and the First Minister to say that employers will have to be flexible – they actually don't, or they may themselves have legitimate business reasons why supporting employees to continue to work from home, or to otherwise work flexibly, is not feasible – particularly as businesses attempt to return to normality after enforced closures, and in many cases, endeavour to recoup lost revenue to ensure their survival. Whilst most employees do have the right to request flexible working of their employers, they do not have the right to insist it is granted and employers do have the right to decline requests if required on business grounds. The Scottish Ministers will appreciate that being a reserved matter they have no authority over employment law and businesses so their telling employers they have to deal with their staffing in a certain way is utterly pointless.

Children themselves are suffering educationally and socially from the ongoing lack of schooling. If we as parents chose to lock our children away and prevent them fully attending school, socialising with friends, not being able to gather with family, or to engage in clubs or activities for the sake of avoiding a virus they have (according to recent estimates on infection rates provided by the Scottish Government) less than 1 in 1000 chance of contracting, and even less of becoming seriously unwell from, we would rightfully be investigated for abusing our children. Yet this is what the Scottish Government have instructed us to do in the name of 'public health'. We all did the right thing but the people and in particular the children of Scotland have now done more than enough and more than can reasonably be expected of any government by its citizens.

My own children will both be in [redacted] after the summer, but I have seen pictures of [redacted] [redacted] classrooms set up to facilitate so called 'social distancing'. They are amongst the saddest pictures I have ever seen and it is not overstating the matter to say that it is cruel for small children to be treated in this way, sitting two metres away from their friends in an at best half full classroom. It is beyond absurd that these frankly draconian measures, where children are forced to treat each other and be treated as diseased, should be allowed to

occur. Rather than being allowed to engage in the very natural practice of seeking comfort from fellow humans, children are to effectively treat each other as a source of infection and harm. The psychological impact of this could well be severe. The prevalence of the virus is now extremely low in the community (estimated at less than 1 in 1000 people given as opposed to estimates of around 1 in 40 people when schools closed) and dropping and it is much more likely than not that come August no children in a school will have the virus at all.

The challenges in high schools are different not least of which children having to study subjects at advanced levels being in school at best half the time. The blended learning and home education model is in my view just nonsense, and fancy terminology for a vague and meaningless concept, and should not be allowed. The adopting of this fudged model will only increase the attainment gap in education further, as many children will not be supported or be able to work at home, for various different reasons. There will also be a significant contrast with private schools which are more likely given smaller class sizes to be able to open fully and the chasm between state and private school educated children will grow even wider. Separately, given the numbers of high school age children who already appear to not be socially distancing and are congregating in large groups, it would seem utterly pointless to maintain this charade in school when it is not occurring outside.

It is simply not good enough for children to be in school half the time or less and absolutely not good enough for Mr Swinney to have said in the Scottish Parliament that educational outcomes will be jeopardised by this approach. He should be looking to make sure that this does not happen. If he cannot do this then he ought to resign as he is simply not fit for purpose within his role.

I would like to make a few further points, specifically around issues of equality, which as a lawyer of several years of practice experience in this field, are of particular concern.

Firstly, as women as a class are much more likely to be the primary carers of children than men, the part time school/'blended learning' approach seeks to impact women adversely in the field of work much more than their male counterparts. It is much more likely to be women who take a back seat in their careers to fulfil the home-based part of the blended learning approach and to be at home for children who are only in school part time. It is my view that the imposition of a provision, criterion or practice (PCP) that states children can only attend school part time may be indirectly discriminatory to women on the grounds of sex, being (along with disability which I will come onto next) a protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010.

Secondly, the imposition of a PCP that treats children with additional support needs or disabilities the same as non disabled children in terms of time in school is potentially indirectly discriminatory as disabled children will as a class be more severely impacted by disruption in education or routine than their non disabled peers. This is unacceptable for children who already through no fault of their own often face significant challenge in their education compared to their peers. In the interests of disclosure, I have an [redacted] who requires a high level of specialist support in order to access the education to which he is as entitled as anyone else.

Given the low incidence of virus in the community, and that this is dropping, continuing with two metres social distancing measures in schools seems an utterly disproportionate measure at this time in contrast to the threat of the virus. I would query as to why this could not now be reduced to one metre, as is under discussion elsewhere in the United Kingdom, and kept under

review – meaning that the current disgraceful arrangements for returning to school would be a ‘worst case scenario’ rather than the default. This would surely be a sensible and more proportionate measure to keep the threat of the virus under control but that would also allow schools to open if not fully, at least on a wider basis than the current proposal. It goes without saying that hygiene and other infection control measures should persist.

I appreciate that the individual substantive measures as to how Scottish Government guidance will be implemented are down to the local authorities and I will also be writing to the Head of Children’s Services at [redacted] Council to put forward my concerns in this regard.

There was great innovation and resource put forward to protect the health service and to ensure that people who contracted Covid 19 would receive treatment, including the creation of NHS Louisa Jordan, and it is of grave concern and deep personal upset that the education of our children is being treated merely as an afterthought. I believe that the crisis in education is now as serious an emergency as the health one and should be treated as such. Our children in school today are the leaders, professionals, and key workers of tomorrow and they cannot and must not be failed. I have heard of MSPs writing to constituents stating that until there is a cure or vaccine for Covid 19 social distancing and blended learning is here to stay. With respect, I would contend that this cannot and must not be the correct approach. If providing children with their fundamental right to an education is not consistent with social distancing, then the answer must be to remove or adapt social distancing – not to deprive children of their right to education. Covid has of course been a huge issue, but other issues, including children’s education are still of monumental importance. Rather than ‘Getting it right for every child’ the Scottish Government are getting it very, very wrong by this approach. They cannot be allowed to let our children become the ‘lost generation’. The ‘cure’ for the virus cannot be worse than the virus itself, and allowing these measures to proceed in education will indeed lead to that being the case.

I would be obliged if you could address this within Parliament and I await your response. I have sent this email to my constituency MSP, as well as the other MSPs for the [redacted] Region.

Regards

[redacted]

14 June 2020 - DFM

From: [redacted]

Sent: 14 June 2020 11:01

To: Education Scotland Complaints <complaints@educationscotland.gov.scot>

Subject: Children returning to school

To whom it may concern,

I recently received an email from my child's school with an attached letter signed by [redacted]. It lays out a vague route map to getting children back to school. I have some questions regarding this.

My main concern is around the blended learning and children going back to school two days per week.

I do not understand why measures are not being taken to get primary school children back to school full time. Primary school is a time where children learn the foundations of each mandatory subject (English, literacy, maths and numeracy). If this learning is not effective in primary school, children are going to struggle moving through their education journey. My concern is that by the time this becomes apparent, it will be too late to address for a significant number of children, possibly even a generation of children.

I wonder what else has been considered in an effort to get children back to school full time. Have Perspex screens been considered for partitioning spaces. Hand cleaning stations at classroom doors. Keeping each class separate from other classes. Staggering break time, lunch time, play time etc or indeed creating zones for each class. And perhaps face masks? This would encourage a bubble approach whereby children would only ever engage with the number of children in their own classroom and would support the minimization of risk.

I wonder whether any parents have been approached and asked to offer ideas about getting their children back to school (outside parent teacher council). I know I certainly haven't.

Education is so important in preparing a child for their adult successes. I do not believe that the blended learning model is in fact good enough for our children and surely there are other ways to approach this that should be considered.

To be clear, I have one child in [redacted] and one child about to start [redacted]. Both me and my [redacted] have tackled the home learning with gusto and my eldest is managing the work so my email is not in an effort to throw back responsibility to our brilliant teachers but rather, I want to know what other approaches have been considered. I also want to know why other approaches that may have been considered, have then been deemed unsuitable. I do not believe blended learning is the only approach nor is it necessarily the right approach.

I am concerned that if there is a significant number of children who have not been actioning the home learning to date, when children return to school, the work will be designed

around children who now need to catch up. As I have mentioned, my [redacted] is making good progress. Will he be held back because other children need to catch up?

In addition, it would appear that the British government are now making decisions based on what is good for the economy rather than being led by science. If this is the case, I wonder how parents are going to return to work and kickstart the economy when they are expected to play a vital role in their child/children's education through the proposed model of blended learning with a huge requirement (certainly for families with multiple children at different stages of their education journey) to be available at home for the home learning aspects. Again, to be clear, I am [redacted], employed by [redacted] and I have been working throughout this covid 19 pandemic.

I would appreciate a response to this email and the following questions:

What other strategies have been considered (other than the blended learning model with a significant reduced time in classrooms)? And why were these other strategies deemed not suitable?

How will children, who return to the same class but now have different learning needs, be managed?

How does the government expect parents to return to work and fully support the blended learning approach?

Regards

[redacted]

14 June 2020 - DFM

From: [redacted]

Sent: Sunday, June 14, 2020 8:35:14 PM

To: Swinney J (John), MSP <John.Swinney.msp@parliament.scot>

Subject: Return to school plans

Dear Mr Swinney

I am writing to express my concern regarding the return to school for pupils in [redacted] The proposed plan of a part time blended model together with the months of education already missed can only be detrimental to their progress and is completely unacceptable.

The government response to the recent health crisis has seen the necessary resources and funding made fully available and yet the same response to the now apparent education crisis has not been forthcoming. It would seem that increasing classes and staffing is possible but cannot be implemented due to the inability of council and government to agree on funding and processes. Perhaps if the SNP had not reneged on their promise of smaller class sizes in the first instance we may not be in this current situation.

Recent research would also suggest that children as a group are less susceptible to, have milder symptoms and are not the super spreaders they were thought to be. This along with reducing rates of infection and the presumption that restrictions will continue to be relaxed over the coming weeks would suggest that the children of [redacted] could return to school full time.

The education of my child is at the forefront of my concern and that of many parents. Over the last few months [redacted] has not had any new learning. [redacted] has been attending a key worker hub as both myself and her father have been working throughout this period. Learning support is not being provided at the hub as it is childcare only with no teaching support. I feel that [redacted] would have received more support at home with one of [redacted] parents but due to the nature of our work that has not been possible and I believe this has put [redacted] at a further disadvantage. We have to give the support when we get home from work which adds to [redacted] day and increases stress and anxiety for all. With the suggested blended model of learning this looks set to continue for the children of parents who work.

The reducing quality of education in Scotland is not new and has been ongoing now for years. I fear that this impending detrimental proposal will push Scottish education to a precipice it will take too long to return from, and the unforgivable negative effects on the education of current pupils will mean that a generation of Scottish children will be disadvantaged unnecessarily.

The education of our children should be made a priority at as a matter of urgency.

Yours faithfully

[redacted]

14 June 2020 - DFM

Dear Cabinet Secretary

I was extremely concerned to read the recent letter to parents from the [redacted] Council about their plans for the return to school in August, which would see my children being educated in school for only four days in three weeks. I became even more worried after watching your own interview this morning on Sunday Politics Scotland.

Surely if rates of infection continue to fall at current rates, the objective should be to re-open schools and return to normal full-time education for all children in August. The “blended learning” proposals currently being put forward will be damaging to our children’s education, will widen the attainment gap and should be the worst case scenario.

There appears to be a distinct lack of ambition and leadership to prioritise the wellbeing and education of our children and young people in the wake of the coronavirus pandemic. Vague references to a return to full-time schooling “as soon as possible” and a half-hearted suggestion that councils should come forward with their own proposals are simply not good enough for an education system that was once among the best in the world. We desperately need ambitious leadership and a national plan from the Scottish Government on this issue.

My own children have had no face-to-face contact with their teachers or fellow students since lockdown began in March. What learning they have done has been entirely on a screen and on their own - as a result of many weeks of this, I can see a huge decrease in their motivation and enthusiasm to learn.

Our children's school have been supportive since March and I'm very grateful to the teachers for the work that they have done at short notice to deal with the immediate emergency. Looking ahead, however, pupils are entitled to expect much more and we need to see a concerted, consistent effort, led by the Scottish Government, to avoid a mental health and educational catastrophe.

The proposals put forward raise a number of specific questions:

- What conditions would need to be in place before full-time education in school can resume?
- With national leadership, huge progress was made to scale up resources in the NHS. Why can this same creativity and energy not now be directed to our children’s education?
- Why is there no national strategy in place to ensure all local authorities are providing a consistent level of face-to-face education from August?
- How can parents return to work - and how can our economy hope to recover - if children are only attending school for 1-2 days a week? Simply asserting that employers should be flexible does not address the reality of this challenge.

The message from today’s open letter from academics and experts to the UK Education Secretary applies just as much to Scotland: “We must now prioritise children and adolescents in the release from lockdown as a matter of utmost urgency in order to prevent a national crisis and the decimation of their futures.”

I hope to see the Scottish Government taking this approach in the weeks ahead, and I look forward to your response to the points above.

I will also copy this letter to the opposition parties' education spokespeople and relevant councillors.

Yours sincerely

[redacted]

14 June 2020 - DFM

Dear John,

I recently received a letter from [redacted] council indicating that our children would return to school 4 days every 3 weeks from August. After nearly three months of homeschooling under the crushing pressure of financial insecurity and general concern about the pandemic this has come as a total bombshell!

As [redacted] i'm shocked at the lack of leadership on this matter. This is not a sideshow to be kicked down the road for local authorities to interpret and implement! Returning our kids to school is a national emergency equal to saving the NHS and rescuing the economy. It requires bold leadership and a willingness to balance risk in order to return our kids to full time education ASAP.

Our teachers are doing a fantastic job in challenging times but they need you and others to fight for the funding and resources to make this work. We need you to do whatever it takes to minimise the damage to our children and allow us to get back to work.

I appreciate there are significant challenges ahead and that teacher and pupil safety are critical but we need innovation, creativity, political will and above all inspiring leadership to overcome these challenges!

Kind regards,

[redacted]

14 June 2020 - DFM

Dear Mr Swinney,

Please find attached an email I sent today to Maureen Watt, my local MSP. In addition to the points I made in this email I also watched your interview today on Politics Scotland and have to say was further dismayed by your proposed approach and extended timetable to return schools to normal activity.

I thought it was interesting to watch the research doctor from St Andrews University who appeared after you on the programme who had undertaken extended research from around the world on transmission of the virus. She made a number of points of relevance to resumption of full time education as follows:

- there is no evidence of transmission of the virus from children to adults or to other children.
- evidence from world studies confirms that transmission takes place from adults to children.
- the vast majority of children have no symptoms and few if any health effects from the virus.

Based on these points I would suggest that schools should return to normal in August without any of the restrictive practices being proposed by the government relative to seating , sharing books/ equipment and social distancing especially at the primary and secondary level.

I will send you separately a letter to the Sunday Times editor today signed by a considerable number (over 50) of university professors and doctors on the critical position of education on the health and opportunities for children and the need to return to full normality on an early basis. Taking all of these points together I would ask the government to consider seriously the points raised and to work towards a full and normal operating position for Scottish schools in August by which time the virus position within the community should be significantly further improved across all regions supporting this position further.

[redacted]

Sent from my iPad

14 June 2020 – DFM

Dear First Minister and Deputy First Minister

Further to the email from the Head Teacher of [redacted] on Friday, regarding the current arrangements for the proposed return to school, I am writing to express my concern. I am sure this is a hugely difficult time for all teachers and I appreciate all that has been done to keep a sense of community going for the children of [redacted] as well as the focus on ongoing academic learning. The past three months have been difficult for teachers, parents and children.

I have read with increasing alarm the plans for the arrangements for next term, however. What is being proposed, no doubt fits with the current social distancing recommendations, but is completely unsustainable and hugely damaging to children and society as a whole if it goes on for any length of time.

I am aware of the real space issue that our school has already, and imagine this is the case for many Scottish schools. It was always going to be impossible to teach in a meaningful way in a socially distanced manner. I do not believe in the school environment we should pretend that this is possible.

As we learn more about Covid on an ongoing basis, as well as learning from what other countries are doing, it seems to me that the Council and the Scottish Government have chosen to take a position which is not comprehensive or nuanced, instead maintaining the mantra of staying at home to save lives. Whilst this is an easy slogan to remember, the approach does not take into account the wider damage being done to the community in the long run. Of course everyone wants to minimise the risk of contracting and passing on this disease, and we have incorporated risk mitigation actions into our daily lives now in order to do this, but the current science shows that children thankfully do not appear to be the primary spreaders of the disease and the virus appears to be declining in the wider population. We are not in the same position as we were in March, or indeed February when it appears to have been circulating widely.

I am not a scientist. I rely on the scientists giving advice, but scientific advice and opinion is not homogenous, and cannot be the only voice in this discussion. All children, not just those from disadvantaged backgrounds, will be hugely damaged if the current policy is implemented particularly, as we have been lead to believe in the media today, it is the plan for the next twelve months. School is not just about learning but also social interaction. The proposal being put forward at the moment gives neither at the level which our children deserve. My children miss and long for school, their friends, the rituals and the input of their teachers.

For working parents, many of whom are likely to face redundancy and real financial upheaval over the next twelve months, this is going to be put an even greater strain on already stretched nerves, as we all try to do our best in every aspect of our lives. This will have an impact on children too. I cannot see how those who continue to have jobs, can properly supervise and develop their children whilst trying to meaningfully work. It is not possible to do either well over a prolonged period of time. Something will have to give.

I also understand that Teachers should be protected. I would have no issue with Teachers wearing PPE, if that was wanted or seen as helpful. The children wouldn't either, I'm sure, as they have grown use to the sight of friends and key workers such as supermarket employees, in full visors and masks.

I would ask that you please ensure that these points are put across in your discussions and that an overall risk based approach is taken, which is kept under constant review and bears in mind that perhaps this crude, one dimensional approach may save some lives, it will also be at a huge cost to society and our children which will sadly indirectly cost lives also. These are very difficult issues and decisions which require careful and comprehensive thinking, which is updated as we learn more about the virus and the situation but they cannot be taken in isolation. There is an opportunity cost in every course of action.

Regards
[redacted]

14 June 2020 - DFM

Subject: FAO John Swinney, re: return of children to school next academic year

Dear Mr Swinney,

While I am very supportive of the path negotiated through the COVID-19 crisis by the Scottish Government, the cautious nature of which is now yielding significant benefits in low infection rates, low death numbers and extremely low ICU attendance rates, I find myself emailing a politician for the first time in my life tonight.

As an exhausted [redacted] of [redacted], I must say I was extremely disappointed by the tone adopted by yourself in the interview held with Gordon Brewer on Politics Scotland on the morning of Sun. 14th June.

In particular, working parents with full time jobs and busy home lives will have been dismayed with the message that the blended model is 'likely' to be employed for the entirety of the 2020-21 school session. There are 2 very significant and important points I would like the Scottish Government to take note of.

1. The unfolding of this pandemic has been unpredictable in many ways. The drastic changes we have seen in many countries, including Scotland, over the last few weeks has displayed just how quickly things can change. In 3 months we have moved through an intense period of high infection rates, large daily death rates and widespread community transmission. Now, just weeks later, and in no small part due to actions of the Scottish Government, we would appear to have this outbreak under control. If the First Minister and yourself want to invoke cautious language on this front, that is your right, but the data that is presented to the public is strong and clear. If there is ambiguity about our current situation, it would serve the government well to share the evidence for this with the general public.

The key point is that it is UNKNOWN what the situation will be in 2 months, let alone 12 months. To state upfront that the blended educational model being proposed will be in existence for the full year sends an EXTREMELY dispiriting message to all parents but especially those exhausted with 3 months of mixing high stress jobs with childcare and teaching their own children. It also seems to continue the extremely pessimistic tone being adopted by the Scottish Government when the country is crying out for good news and optimism.

A more powerful and positive message would have been to state that an in-depth review would be held at the October holiday, or at Christmas time, which will surely be the case if the current infection rates continue to decrease, even if that decrease is at a slower rate than we are currently seeing. In that situation it must at least be a POSSIBILITY that a return to full time education could be made earlier.

I believe parents would like to see some light at the end of a very long and dark tunnel - and in now way was that light observed in your interview today - in fact, you seem to be stating that you won't even look for it this year.

2. The other point that I believe sends a very poor message was your statement that you "accept that the blended model is not as good as what we had previously". This must surely count as a MAJOR understatement. 'Not as good' suggests that the blended model is on some kind of comparable level to the type of education being provided prior to March. This is simply not true - the blended model is a terrible situation which I believe will be viewed by the vast majority of working parents as a complete disaster.

Full time working parents have indeed been trying to do full time jobs in lockdown while trying to educate their children, and relying on the goodwill of their employers to achieve this. But to state the obvious, it is NOT POSSIBLE to work while educating your child. It is NOT POSSIBLE to give 100% to your day job while your child is learning or even playing. From personal experience I can tell you directly that the stress levels induced by trying to work, hold conference calls, video calls, etc while your young children ([redacted]) also demand your attention are frightening and unhealthy. The stress carries through into your personal relationships and affects your wellbeing and the wellbeing of those around you. To be told this must continue indefinitely will be most working parents' worst nightmare.

It is not just 'not as good'. Children will NOT receive the full education to which they are entitled. The education they receive will be patchy, less rich and overall poorer. Reducing their social contacts will harm their growth and development, and the attainability gap will unquestionably widen as this plays out over families from

varying socio-economic backgrounds. Stress levels for parents will rise, relations with their employers will suffer. And all this before the economic impact is even discussed, or the impact on the employment rate.

I have yet to see a Scottish Government minister say that they truly understand all this. Perhaps it is unfair to expect the government to lay out all these disadvantages to the blended model given that it is certainly necessary in the short term. But it feels like a slap in the face to simply be told that you accept 'it's not as good'.

Of course schools cannot return full time as yet, and almost certainly not in August. But where is the admission that a return to full time education is a social and economic **NECESSITY** to recover from this crisis? Where are the radical plans to make this a reality, even if it needs to be a 6 month project? Where is appropriation of community hubs or other council properties as potential education sites, or temporary structures to allow full time teaching of smaller groups. There seems to be **NO** ambition to achieve any of that, simply a willingness to take it slow and let parents and their employers take the strain.

So when we are told that it is likely that this is going to be the approach for the next 12 months, I have to say I find that completely unacceptable. A return to full time education is not imminent, nor should it be. But it should be the Scottish Government's **TOP** priority when it comes to economic recovery from this crisis - because economic recovery will simply not be possible while working parents are spending half their week at home educating their children (or trying to).

I, and I believe, many other working parents, would desperately like to see that you understand this, and that the Scottish Government is prepared to escalate its importance and take **RADICAL** steps in order to achieve a return to full time education.

I write to you as someone completely politically unaffiliated, and would dearly like to believe that you will read this letter and that a response will be forthcoming.

Best wishes,

[redacted]

14 June – DFM



Before you print think about the ENVIRONMENT

From: [redacted]

Sent: 14 June 2020 13:44

To: Robison S (Shona), MSP <Shona.Robison.msp@parliament.scot>; Swinney J (John), MSP <John.Swinney.msp@parliament.scot>

Subject: schools return

Dear Shona

I am writing as your constituent. I have included John Swinney because my suggestion is really intended for him but will probably bounce as I am not his constituent.

My [redacted] and I watched John's interview with Gordon Brewer this morning. A possible temporary solution to the capacity problem occurred to me. I am sure that John has some very capable civil servants working for him and in the local authorities as well, so forgive me if it has already been considered and discarded.

Most summers I attend classic car events and clan gatherings all of which have been cancelled. Weddings and corporate events are also on hold. There is a considerable service industry which supplies tents and marquees for these events which, like many other businesses are currently struggling to survive. (I am not personally connected to these businesses, but have used their services).

Hence there are likely to be warehouses full of unused tents and marquees which surely could be installed in school playgrounds to provide temporary capacity without excessive expense. I realise that as winter draws near there will be problems with heating these structures but it would at least allow the autumn term to begin.

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[redacted]

14 June – DFM

Sent: Sunday, June 14, 2020 11:20:23 AM

To: Swinney J (John), MSP <John.Swinney.msp@parliament.scot>

Subject: Blended schooling

Dear Mr Swinney

I have just listened to your interview on BBC and have read an article in the Scotsman where you are saying that secondary age children are to return to school for 1 day per week of face to face teaching.

I am appalled by this prospect for this current cohort of children in their very important years of learning. You talk of blended learning where parents will again be expected to pick up the huge responsibility for educating their children with often little or no knowledge themselves.

My recent experience has been as a concerned [redacted] of an [redacted] pupil in [redacted] district school. I have been mentoring [redacted] on a daily basis for 6 weeks now and I am angry and disappointed by the very small amount of work which is being sent on a daily basis. In that 6 week period, for instance, [redacted] has received one session of maths, two lessons in English, two Spanish, two French, one music and a good number of projects for Modern Studies. This is surely not equivalent to 6 weeks schooling? On many days, there is no work to be done and we have resorted to BBC Bitesize. [redacted] and I are committed to continuing [redacted] education but this is really frustrating and below standard.

If the way forward is going to be this type of teaching, then the teachers need to pick up the pace a great deal to fulfil their part of their contracts.

I also note from your interview that the Scottish Government is not offering local authorities funding to engage more teachers, more venues, more resources, but waiting for the authorities to come to you with their plans which you will then consider.

In my opinion, this is a dereliction of your duty as Education Secretary. Where is the lateral thinking we saw to protect the health service? Are children to be the ones to suffer by this government's lack of vision for the education attainment of this whole generation from nursery to the end of secondary?

I await your reply.

[redacted]

14 June 2020

Dear [redacted]

In light of your dated 11 June 2020, we have several concerns about the operating framework of [redacted] Council.

Our two [redacted] are at [redacted] We cannot fault the School's commitment, energy, imagination and perseverance they have poured into home-learning over the past months, especially in the context of a diverse school with a very new Headteacher.

You will appreciate that home-learning over the past 3 months, along with regular work / care, has been extremely challenging.

We are however deeply disappointed to read that [redacted] Council is anticipating children attending school for only a third of the time.

We also find this exceptionally poor in comparison to all other council's plans in Scotland, where [redacted] seems to be the only one adopting this policy (many appear to be as a minimum returning to school on a 50% basis). This tied in with the non-schooling on a Friday makes the policies being adopted non-sensical in terms of educating the children of this city.

We do not comment on social distancing measures and understand that those public health decisions are beyond the remit of the Council.

The letter that you sent demonstrated no level of ambition for the children of this city. The circumstances of Covid-19 are of course extremely difficult but there are a number of measures that could be put in place to increase children's engagement.

In particular we would like to understand if the following have been considered as options.

1. Public Buildings/Unused Offices: [redacted] has many public buildings and there are offices all over the city that are not being used. Why are the Council not considering their use with schools inhabiting places where 'bubbles' of children can be kept apart with staff moving between.

2. Outdoor learning. There are many outdoor opportunities around the city with many outdoor providers, not to mention Active Schools. Why is the council not considering contracting with outdoor providers to provide constructive, engaged activities in days when children cannot be in school.

3. The level of disparity between private schools and those run by the state will simply increase further as a result of the measures you are looking at introducing. We say this given the private schools are returning at almost full

school week AND have interactive learning sessions delivered online by teachers currently, something that is not currently allowed in [redacted] schools (contrary to most of the rest of Scotland and the UK). Have you considered the private schools model - 1/2 day of school + second 1/2 of supervised play. Why can our kids not get facilitated online video run classes by their teachers.

4. The shortening of the summer holidays which are upcoming shortly. With most people unable to travel, and desperate to get their children back into a structured learning and social environment, have you considered shortening the summer break to a few weeks and opening the schools in mid to late July, with perhaps an extended half term later in the year to compensate.

We would also like to understand what scope and permissions individual schools have to go beyond the framework the Council has imposed?

One further thing which we also find confusing, is why different schooling provisions are being made for special needs children, per your letter of 12 June 2020. Whilst we understand children with special needs require additional support and care, the provision of education should be even across the board and not discriminate against any children (no matter what race, disability or religion).

We of course appreciate the current circumstances, but schooling operating on such a reduced model will continue to harm children's education, social development and stymie their parents ability to work and engage in the economy.

Please can [redacted] Council demonstrate some more ambition. The provision of education services is the most important responsibility of the Council; there is surely an awful lot more that can be done, and at speed.

Yours sincerely

[redacted]

14 June – DFM

From: [redacted]

Sent: 14 June 2020 18:15

To: [redacted]

Cc: Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills <DFMCSE@gov.scot>; daniel.johnson.msp@parliament.scot; [redacted] [redacted]

Subject: patterns of schools returning in [redacted]

Dear Councillors,

cc Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills, Daniel Johnson MSP, [redacted], [redacted]

I wanted to write to you about Friday's announcement about the schools returning in August.

I know you are being guided by Scottish Government decisions, so I won't go into detail about the fundamental thinking underlying the blended approach other than to say I would question whether the right balance between different risks is being found here when the medical risk to children is extremely low, but there are vast known risks to children and parents' mental health, education, social development, increasing inequalities and child protection issues as families are stuck at home.

But there are a couple of concerns I have that are the direct responsibility of the [redacted] Council that I want to raise in more detail.

Firstly, why has [redacted] Council decided to only return children 33% of the time, when all other local authorities are planning two days a week or more. A number of the local authorities have now announced 2 days a week, and I have teacher friends in a few that have not yet officially announced and they are all preparing to return primary school children on two days a week, and secondary pupils more than that. I am extremely concerned that [redacted] pupils and their families are being treated unfairly, missing out on education, and parents having to juggle work with home learning more than families elsewhere. This is after months of home schooling with not even video contact to teachers, while friends' children in other local authorities were getting daily video calls with their teacher and entire class.

Secondly, I am very worried about the pattern of one week on, two weeks off that is being discussed in the media. I am frankly incredulous that this is even being considered.

From the children's point of view, this will make every 'on' week feel like the start of school and the two weeks in between like holidays. My younger [redacted] is about to start [redacted], and [redacted] mental health, social development and behaviour has suffered a lot, and is doing so increasingly as lockdown continues. We're at the point now where [redacted] can't even see [redacted] friends in the physically distanced way that is now allowed, because [redacted] gets upset at not being able to get close to them and refuses to speak at all. [redacted] is in desperate need of a return to routine and to see [redacted] peers regularly, and I fear that if schools do go back on this three weekly pattern [redacted] will not be able to deal with school at all.

From the parents perspective, I struggle to understand how anyone expects people to organise their work, if they can't have a settled routine. My [redacted] and I are both lucky in that we have [redacted] jobs that can be done remotely, and understanding employers willing to accommodate the childcare through flexible hours. But we also have jobs that require us to build relationships and be available to speak to people during office hours. We have managed to make this work for three months, but we are frankly at the end of our tether, and it is simply not sustainable to carry on like this for much longer. If we are in a working pattern where we are around some weeks but not others, while people from other parts of Scotland are able to return to a more stable hours, I fully expect that the people we work with will eventually stop trying to arrange meetings around us, and simply leave us out of the conversations we need to be in to be able to do our jobs.

I worry particularly for people who can't work from home, or have less understanding employers, who will have to leave their jobs.

Like I say, I struggle to understand how the one week on, two weeks off option was ever even considered. I presume it was developed by people who either don't have children or have a non-working parent at home so don't have to worry about juggling home working and home learning.

Ultimately, I would urge you to reflect on whether the very significant negative impacts we know this policy of extremely limited time in schools will continue to have, are acceptable. I know you will be under a lot of pressure but this does feel like [redacted] Council abdicating its responsibility to look after the education and wellbeing of its children and families.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Kind regards,

[redacted]

14 June – DFM

From: [redacted]

Sent: Sunday, June 14, 2020 1:41:57 PM

To: Swinney J (John), MSP <John.Swinney.msp@parliament.scot>

Subject: Questions Regarding School Return

Hi John,

I hope you and your family are all ok. We are all fine here and been very fortunate which I count my blessings for.

I wanted to e-mail you as I am extremely concerned about the announcement from our high school that it is intending to only go back one day a week in August. I don't like to complain and I generally see myself as a positive and understanding person but I feel like I have to say my piece on this. Please don't take this personally and I acknowledge that this is a tremendously difficult situation, however here are my questions/views:

What are you going to do about the inequality that will occur if some schools only go back 1 day/week, as is the case in [redacted] High School in your own constituency, compared with other schools offering 2/3 days/week? How can this unfair disparity be tolerated? What adjustments will be given when it comes to exams if this turns out to be a long-term arrangement?

It is very likely that in the majority of households women will need to shoulder the burden of home-schooling, which will have a knock on impact on their ability to work, their career prospects and their pension contributions for example. What are you going to do to lessen the burden and compensate for this inevitable inequality?

We are able to build hospitals in days and the NHS is widely recognised as dealing with the crisis positively with a can-do attitude - why is the education sector unable to provide the same innovative response to this new education crisis?

Teachers don't have access to education technologists and many lack the skills to adjust their material to suitable online content therefore the quality of home learning material that has been uploaded online and sent home to students is woefully inadequate. This has included powerpoints that in some cases are barely readable and have spelling errors, teachers using multiple platforms that puts access barriers to the user, no delivery of actual lessons. Why hasn't the Scottish Government pulled together an online curriculum using 'dream team' of recognised exceptional educators to create engaging video content based on the Curriculum for Excellence that all teachers in Scotland could use? Also private schools are providing zoom lessons based on a timetable - why couldn't the public sector schools adopt this approach?

I understand that limitations and restrictions are in place for the safety of the nation but either a practical solution to allow more children back into schools needs to be implemented or a far better approach to the delivery of online education needs to be urgently tackled or the outcome will be catastrophic.

Again, I want to re-iterate that this is not at all personal and I am sure you are working tirelessly so I hope you take these questions to be legitimate concerns and be assured that they are not meant to be confrontational.

All the best and kind regards,

[redacted]

14 June – DFM

From: [redacted]

Sent: Sunday, June 14, 2020 4:59:27 PM

To: Swinney J (John), MSP <John.Swinney.msp@parliament.scot>; Alister Jack <alister.jack.mp@parliament.uk>; Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills <DFMCSE@gov.scot>; Firstminster@gov.scot <Firstminster@gov.scot>; mcconnellj@parliament.uk <mcconnellj@parliament.uk>

Subject: Blended Education

Good afternoon,

As parents, we wish to express our concern at the impact that current plans will have on the welfare and education of the children of Scotland.

The current position in Scotland, with primary schools being closed from March until August, is already having a huge mental, social, emotional and educational impact on our children. From an educational perspective, it is well recognised by educators that a child's educational attainment is worse after the summer holidays than before, and the 5 month break, for many children, will result in educational disadvantages that may never be rectified. Our youngest school attenders, due to start P1 in August 2020 will miss out on a key time for interpersonal skills, language and literacy development, which is very disappointing, and something from which they may never fully recover. The government's own 'strategic framework for reopening schools' recognises that temporary school closures have been shown to negatively influence a child's educational achievement, both short and long term.

In addition to the educational difficulties, the impact on the welfare of the children across our region cannot be underestimated. For many children, school is their "safe place". This has been removed, with no hope of return for many months and even then on a very part-time basis. Countless children living in deprivation get themselves up and out to school because it is a warm building, with the promise of a warm meal, from someone who might be kind to them and notice them for a while. Many children will find the proposed return lacking in routine and consistency. Concerns about the extended impact of Covid-19, such as children being exposed to alcoholism and domestic abuse, have already been raised. Some of these children are not known to services and may not easily be identified as priority cases.

The coronavirus pandemic has been, and remains, very difficult for all aspects of society. For children in particular, who are unlikely to understand the rationale behind the current restrictions, their life has simply been shrunk. Home schooling is not equal for all, due to both parental work commitments and deprivation. The provision offered for home schooling by schools and teachers to children has varied greatly. We have no reason to believe that this level of inequality and disparity in home-school support would be rectified under the current proposals.

The WHO has said the best place for children is in school. Paediatric departments across Scotland have seen tiny numbers of COVID positive cases and no mortality has occurred in the under 15 years age group in Scotland. The Public Health England report last week confirmed that children are not significantly affected by Covid-19. The RCPCH's summary of the evidence available worldwide on covid-19 in children (updated weekly) suggests that, as far as we can know from the limited evidence currently available, children are both

unlikely to become seriously unwell with covid-19 and unlikely to spread the condition even if carrying it. The government's 'strategic framework for reopening schools' also recognises the weakness of the evidence in support of schools remaining closed and states that a minority of the Chief Medical Officer's Advisory Group felt that "once the timing was appropriate to enable opening of schools in any form, physical distancing in classrooms may not be a necessary measure and that fully re-opening schools should be considered." We would like to express our support for this view and our desire for all children to be fully educated and not further disadvantaged by this pandemic.

Locally, independent schools have indicated that they will be resuming schooling, in school, full time. Their smaller class sizes and larger facilities enable this. Our state educated children will be the victims of significant social and educational inequality under the current proposals.

Given that the Scottish schools do not return for two months and the early hopeful signs of falling rates of covid-19, why is the first position not for all schools to assume they will fully re-open as normal in August? This should surely be our first option, with preparations simultaneously made for a back-up plan of maximal schooling as safely as possible, should a second wave of covid-19 hit. In the event that there is a second wave and full re-opening is not possible, plans could be put in place now to create temporary classrooms in local community or commercial spaces. Could retired teachers or teaching assistants be called upon to help, in the same way that retired NHS workers have been asked to return? Given that the NHS was able to create and staff temporary hospitals in a few weeks, one wonders why the same cannot be done to ensure that education can be offered on a full time basis for all of our children. It is difficult to see how parents will be able to return to work, without normal schooling and childcare in place.

We understand the concerns of both teachers and parents about returning to the classroom and the need to comply with social distancing measures. However, many children and staff have been in keyworker school and nursery hubs throughout this pandemic. The teaching and nursery staff who have facilitated this deserve recognition and thanks. They also provide a potentially valuable resource in exploring how covid-19 has impacted those children and staff already in close proximity to one another. Anecdotally, local hubs report not using PPE or enforcing social distancing amongst children, and yet low rates of covid-19 amongst staff and pupils. Research to confirm or refute this could easily be undertaken in the hubs currently running, to provide a guide as to what we can expect when schools go back?

We ask you to act on behalf of all of our children, a vulnerable group who do not easily have a voice of their own. The long-term impact of continued school closures will have immeasurable effects on the social, emotional and educational welfare of all our children and potentially wider reaching consequences. School is not and never was, just about education. Let us use that knowledge to drive some sensible decision-making. There are risks in respect of Covid-19. However there are also very real, current risks in moving forwards with what is currently proposed in regard to schooling. We would be remiss as parents if we did not raise these concerns.

We urge you to aim for the full re-opening of schools and full-time education of all children in Scotland from August, if the current covid-19 case numbers continue to fall. The aim of lockdown was to prevent the NHS being overwhelmed and this has been achieved. We must now consider how to minimise the negative impact of this situation for all of our children.

My [redacted] is [redacted] and [redacted] was that concerned and worried on the impact on [redacted] education [redacted] actually emailed both the first minister and the education minister and then told me [redacted] had done it. I'm proud that [redacted] wanted to stand up for [redacted] rights and try to get [redacted] voice heard.

Yours sincerely,

[redacted]

14 June – DFM

[redacted]

Sunday 14 June 2020

Dear Mr Swinney,

As parents, we wish to express our concern at the lack of attention being placed on the welfare and education of the children of Scotland.

The current position in Scotland, with primary schools being closed from March until August is already having huge mental, social, emotional and educational impact on our children. From an educational perspective, it is well recognised by educators that a child's educational attainment is worse after the summer holidays than before, and the 5 month break, for many children, will result in educational disadvantages that can never be rectified. Our [redacted] school attenders, due to start P1 in August 2020, will miss out on a key time for language and literacy development, which is very disappointing, and something from which they may never recover.

In addition to the educational difficulties, the impact on the welfare of the children across our country cannot be underestimated. For many children, school is their "safe place". This has been removed, with no hope of return for many months and even then on a very part-time basis. Countless children living in deprivation get themselves up and out to school because it is a warm building, with the promise of a warm meal, from someone who might be kind to them and notice them for a while. Many children will find the proposed return, lacking in routine and consistency. The impact of lack of schooling on a child or young person has already resulted in increased contacts with General Practitioners and mental health professionals, because a child has lost school and other avenues for respite or social interaction outside of home. It is well recognised by those who work in child protection that concerns are often first raised by school. Heart-breaking stories are emerging of the extended impact of Covid-19 such as children being exposed to alcoholism and domestic abuse. The 2015 report from 'What Works Scotland' found that the traditional summer holidays are already a time of great stress and impoverishment for thousands of school pupils. It is difficult to imagine that the proposed 'blended learning' program will present any more support for these children than they experience during the usual 6-7 weeks away from school over the summer.

The coronavirus pandemic has been very difficult for all aspects of society and remains so. For children in particular, who are unlikely to understand the rationale behind the current restrictions, their life has simply been shrunk. Home schooling is not equal for all, due to parental work commitments, level of parental education and deprivation. The Scottish government has permitted the education of our children to take a back seat, especially when you consider the plans to open up shops and the economy, which of course is important, but surely not as important as the wellbeing of our children - who are potentially being overlooked. The provision offered for home schooling by schools and teachers to children has varied greatly. We have no reason to believe that this level of inequality and disparity in home-school support would be rectified under the current proposals.

The WHO has said the best place for children is in school. Paediatric departments across Scotland have seen tiny numbers of COVID positive cases and no mortality has occurred in the under 15 years age group. The Public Health England report last week confirmed that children are not significantly affected by Covid-19. It would also appear that they are not the “super spreaders” of this disease, as was once feared.

Your vision, as described in the 2020 National Improvement Framework and Improvement Plan, is ‘to deliver both excellence in terms of ensuring children and young people acquire a broad range of skills and capacities at the highest levels, whilst also delivering equity so that every child and young person should thrive and have the best opportunity to succeed, regardless of their social circumstances or additional needs.’ It is clear that in 2020/21 these circumstances are exceptionally challenging. That is why we need you to step up to that challenge and ‘go the extra mile’ for our children. Independent schools are resuming schooling, in school, full time. Our state educated children will be the victims of significant social and educational inequality under the current proposals. The attainment gap that you identify as a key priority to close between the most and least disadvantaged children will be wider than ever.

Last week, we received a letter from the head teacher of the [redacted] school that our children attend. She forecast a 1.5-day per week pattern of attendance. She also explained ‘in the meantime, other areas of the school (eg open areas, gym halls, dining halls, computer suite) are being measured up and capacity with 2m distancing rule applied. We will then be able to work out if we can apply a 2 week rotation which would mean that pupils would be in school 2 days per week.’ You have already suggested that children should attend school ‘as close to 50%’ as possible. Our children are being offered 30%. This letter did not give the impression of any urgency. There are 2 months before schools return, surely every possible opportunity to make provisions to ensure the maximum numbers of children are able to attend school for the highest number of days possible? If social distancing measures continue to be part of the government strategy for the return to school in August, could temporary classrooms in local community or commercial spaces be created? Could retired teachers, teaching assistants or volunteers be called upon to help? Given that the NHS was able to create and staff temporary hospitals in a few weeks, one wonders why the same cannot be done to ensure that education can be offered on a full time basis for our children.

We ask you to act on behalf of all of our children, a vulnerable group who do not easily have a voice of their own. The long-term impact of time away from school will have immeasurable effects on the social, emotional and educational welfare of all our children and potentially wider reaching consequences. School is not and never was, just about education. Let us use that knowledge to drive some sensible decision-making. There are risks in respect of Covid-19. However there are also very real, current risks in moving forwards with what is currently proposed in regard to schooling. To lead a country successfully through the COVID-19 pandemic and then jeopardise our children’s education and welfare may be a pyrrhic victory. These children are our future. We would be remiss as parents if we did not raise these concerns.

Yours sincerely
[redacted]

14 June – DFM

From: [redacted]

Sent: 14 June 2020 11:12

To: Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills <DFMCSE@gov.scot>

Subject: Reopening of schools

Dear Mr Swinney,

I write to you with concern to the plan for the reopening of schools. I live in [redacted] and my children attend [redacted]. I was disappointed this week to learn that my children will only be returning 2 days a week, the fact that the majority of schooling will still be done at home is to me unacceptable. My family and the teachers have worked hard to try and maintain a good level of education and I understand the reasons behind these decisions and the need to put plans in place however this absolutely no substitute for learning at school with their peers.

Surely Education is "essential" and can be looked at differently to other things. Children can't be at school with the same class mates in the same classroom everyday but I can take them to many different parks, Zoos and shops on the days they are not at school, surely children are safer and follow a much better routine in school.

I also fear that although the FM says she wont have restrictions in place for a moment longer than they have to be, the Schools will be forgotten about and will only be looked at on a term by term basis.

Your plea to people to continue to work from home and for employers to be flexible as possible is also unreasonable. I am sure you are fully aware that people who work in retail, leisure or hospitality cannot work from home and can only work within the hours the business is open. Yes key workers will continue to be given extra child care however by August are we not all key workers as we need to get back to work to earn a living!

As I said at the beginning my children and I have worked hard and I am proud of what they have acheived but this will not be sustainable into the next term. I must also again praise the staff of [redacted] for the support they have given parents in this difficult situation. I understand the need to plan now but the new school term is 8 weeks away, look how far we have came and how things have changed in the last 8 weeks. Children have a right to an education and I just fear you are settling for the new normal of this part time education and how long it will last.

Regards

[redacted]

14 June – DFM

From: [redacted]

Sent: 14 June 2020 20:22

To: Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills <DFMCSE@gov.scot>

Subject:

Dear Mr Swinney,

As parents, we wish to express our concern at the impact that current plans will have on the welfare and education of the children of Scotland.

The current position in Scotland, with schools being closed from March until August, is already having a huge mental, social, emotional and educational impact on our children. From an educational perspective, it is well recognised by educators that a child's educational attainment is worse after the summer holidays than before, and the 5 month break, for many children, will result in educational disadvantages that may never be rectified. Our youngest school attenders, due to start P1 in August 2020 will miss out on a key time for interpersonal skills, language and literacy development, which is very disappointing, and something from which they may never fully recover. The government's own 'strategic framework for reopening schools' recognises that temporary school closures have been shown to negatively influence a child's educational achievement, both short and long term.

In addition to the educational difficulties, the impact on the welfare of the children across our region cannot be underestimated. For many children, school is their "safe place". This has been removed, with no hope of return for many months and even then on a very part-time basis. Countless children living in deprivation get themselves up and out to school because it is a warm building, with the promise of a warm meal, from someone who might be kind to them and notice them for a while. Many children will find the proposed return lacking in routine and consistency. Concerns about the extended impact of Covid-19, such as children being exposed to alcoholism and domestic abuse, have already been raised. Some of these children are not known to services and may not easily be identified as priority cases.

The coronavirus pandemic has been, and remains, very difficult for all aspects of society. For children in particular, who are unlikely to understand the rationale behind the current restrictions, their life has simply been shrunk. Home schooling is not equal for all, due to both parental work commitments and deprivation. The provision offered for home schooling by schools and teachers to children has varied greatly. We have no reason to believe that this level of inequality and disparity in home-school support would be rectified under the current proposals.

The WHO has said the best place for children is in school. Paediatric departments across Scotland have seen tiny numbers of COVID positive cases and no mortality has occurred in the under 15 years age group in Scotland. The Public Health England report last week confirmed that children are not significantly affected by Covid-19. The RCPCH's summary of the evidence available worldwide on covid-19 in children (updated weekly) suggests that, as far as we can know from the limited evidence currently available, children are both unlikely to become seriously unwell with covid-19 and unlikely to spread the condition even if carrying it. The government's 'strategic framework for reopening schools' also recognises the weakness of the evidence in support of schools remaining closed and states that a minority of the Chief Medical Officer's Advisory Group felt that "once the timing was appropriate to enable opening of schools in any form, physical distancing in classrooms may not be a necessary measure and that fully re-opening schools should be considered." We would like to express our support for this view and our desire for all children to be fully educated and not further disadvantaged by this pandemic.

Locally, independent schools have indicated that they will be resuming schooling, in school, full time. Their smaller class sizes and larger facilities enable this. Our state educated children will be the victims of significant social and educational inequality under the current proposals. On top of that [redacted] Council's woeful "schooling" is a disgrace. After 10 weeks of lockdown neither my primary or secondary child has had a single video or virtual class, just work set online, often with little or no feedback from teachers.

Given that the Scottish schools do not return for two months and the early hopeful signs of falling rates of covid-19, why is the first position not for all schools to assume they will fully re-open as normal in August? This should surely be our first option, with preparations simultaneously made for a back-up plan of maximal schooling as safely as possible, should a second wave of covid-19 hit. In the event that there is a second wave and full re-opening is not possible, plans could be put in place now to create temporary classrooms in local community or commercial spaces. Could retired teachers or teaching assistants be called upon to help, in the same way that retired NHS workers have been asked to return? Given that the NHS was able to create and staff temporary hospitals in a few weeks, one wonders why the same cannot be done to ensure that education can be offered on a full time basis for all of our children. It is difficult to see how parents will be able to return to work, without normal schooling and childcare in place.

We understand the concerns of both teachers and parents about returning to the classroom and the need to comply with social distancing measures. However, many children and staff have been in keyworker school and nursery hubs throughout this pandemic. The teaching and nursery staff who have facilitated this deserve recognition and thanks. They also provide a potentially valuable resource in exploring how covid-19 has impacted those children and staff already in close proximity to one another. Anecdotally, local hubs report not using PPE or enforcing social distancing amongst children, and yet low rates of covid-19 amongst staff and pupils. Research to confirm or refute this could easily be undertaken in the hubs currently running, to provide a guide as to what we can expect when schools go back?

We ask you to act on behalf of all of our children, a vulnerable group who do not easily have a voice of their own. The long-term impact of continued school closures will have immeasurable effects on the social, emotional and educational welfare of all our children and potentially wider reaching consequences. School is not and never was, just about education. Let us use that knowledge to drive some sensible decision-making. There are risks in respect of Covid-19. However there are also very real, current risks in moving forwards with what is currently proposed in regard to schooling. We would be remiss as parents if we did not raise these concerns.

We urge you to aim for the full re-opening of schools and full-time education of all children in Scotland from August, if the current covid-19 case numbers continue to fall. The aim of lockdown was to prevent the NHS being overwhelmed and this has been achieved. We must now consider how to minimise the negative impact of this situation for all of our children.

Yours sincerely,

[redacted]

14 June - DFM

From: [redacted]

Sent: 14 June 2020 17:16

To: [redacted] john.swinney.msp@parliament.scot alister.jack.mp@parliament.uk; mconnellj@parliament.uk; Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills <DFMCSE@gov.scot>

Subject: Blended Learning and August Return

Good Morning

The discussion about how and when pupils might return is at the forefront of all parents and teachers minds. Many teachers will be anxious about going back for their own health and risk of Covid and many pupils and parents will equally be concerned about any risk. As a parent the last thing I want to do is put my [redacted] in danger or any undue risk.

With this in mind I have gone to the statistics of this and tried to analyse the groups that might be most effected. I have used Scot Gov as my statistical data base and the figures are stark in their illumination of this disease.

The figures illustrate that 90% of the deaths are over retirement age (65) - and the number of people that have died from this disease up to the age of 65 is 360 people. Of these 360 people in Scotland of working age 90.4 percent (uk average) had pre existing medical conditions - many of these serious including Cancer and heart disease. The average number of pre existing medical conditions was 2.4.

In Children age 0-15 there were zero deaths.

from 15-44 there were only 26 deaths..... its hard to know the breakdown in this age group. **so up to the age of 44 only 26 people have died in Scotland.**

So the point is that children seem relatively unaffected by this. The as RISK group would probably be over 65 and those with pre existing medical conditions.

So I think mitigation measures need put in place, such as distancing for teachers (they are more at risk) - screens perhaps for teachers, and any teachers with a pre-existing medical condition should be wary. If they have a severe pre existing medical condition then perhaps they should not teach at the moment. This would also apply to pupils that have pre existing medical conditions.

We have to be wary, but there is a risk to everything in life, which has to be assessed. It appears to me the greatest risk is for teachers with medical conditions.

My [redacted] is a very bright and diligent pupil and as parents we are fully engaged with [redacted] education, but [redacted] has found it very difficult. I know many other children have too, and many will not have the same parental support that we give.

I understand the proposal is for children to go back to school in [redacted] just 2/3 days per week. I feel that Pupils should go back full time or at the very least four days per week. I am disappointed at the lack of engagement at a local level regarding these decisions. Especially when the whole of the school parent population were consulted in changing the number of school periods. This proposal is a more immense change that that and should have been handled in a similar fashion.

I understand [redacted] city council are sending the pupils back 5 days per week for a half day. This would be a better option than 2 days per week, but not as good as four. If we go with the 2 day per week option then a whole generation of children will be at risk of having a severely damaged education, which will effect their chances of higher education and future job prospects.

I have heard it said (but can not confirm this) that the blended learning will go on until a vaccine is found?? **If we look at the progress of the MERS vaccine we still dont have one after 7 years or**

SARS after 17 years we still have NO vaccine. Waiting for a vaccine would potentially compromise the pupils education for the next 2 decades ! Infact there was an article in the times saying that this could at least last a year

Mitigation techniques can be put in place for pupils. ALL halls, sports halls and assembly halls can be used to increase the physical distance between pupils. Teachers can be given a Perspex screen for the front of each class.

Another option is that lessons can be live streamed for pupils at the school if they are not physically in the same room as the teacher this would allow the children who currently simply receive and uploaded document to read followed by an assignment proper teaching and engagement. The current offering on teams is subpar at best it is nothing more than home work being set online returned and marked there is no teaching.. Although the teachers provide feedback they are limited to what they can do with the children. in 3 months we have had three real-time lessons one for humanities, and two Spanish which really helped with engagement and learning. Whereas [redacted] Council use teams on a daily basis for live virtual lessons. The island schools off mainland Scotland use a different online platform for lessons via video and I understand mainland schools who do not want to use teams are using this. What is the issue with the [redacted] council subscription that prevents online lessons? After all they are happy to hold parent council meetings on zoom (infact many private schools are holiday zoom lessons for all subjects)

If the social distancing measures are eased from 2 metres for Pubs and restaurant's etc can we have confirmation that schools will follow suit? And if this is the case is [redacted] council in a position to reverse their position swiftly so any delay isn't to the detriment of our youngsters education?

It is disturbing to think that if exams do not happen in 2021 and do not start back up that the first taste of pupils sitting exams will be when they sit highers and even advanced highers in some situations rather than the gradual introduction in 4th year which really does help them prepare. John Swinney was quoted In the Scotsman and Herald today to say that Local Authorities must have pupils in school at least 50% of the time and any who dont will have to justify this. I hope on this basis that the proposal which was pushed by [redacted] parent council is what is taken forward as a minimum but there is no reason why children cannot have more hours by utilising technology and live link ups between class rooms and halls elsewhere.

We need to be strategic and get the pupils back to school, while protecting the most vulnerable pupils and staff. Regions like [redacted] which has had very low numbers could easily return back to full time education.

As I have mentioned there is a risk in everything in life, whether its going skiing for even walking to school.

Kind Regards

[redacted]

14 June – DFM

From: [redacted]

Sent: Sunday, June 14, 2020 1:11:44 PM

To: Swinney J (John), MSP <John.Swinney.msp@parliament.scot>

Subject: Schools

Dear Mr Swinney

Please can I ask a question about schools? I realise and completely understand why the schools cannot return fully in August and may not for the school year. I work for the NHS and I don't want a second wave to happen and pressurise the hospitals so I support what the Government is doing and I hope they don't relax the 2m rule either.

I am really really anxious and concerned and I actually feel sick because we will have to do home learning which I have been doing successfully (only because I have been removed from my desk due to social distancing) and happy to continue. I volunteered to face fit masks for the doctors and nurses. I am normally a medical secretary. However, when the schools go back I very much doubt my employers at [redacted] will support me being at home most of the week and I will be made to use my annual leave and take unpaid leave which I cannot afford and I doubt others will either. What are we supposed to do??

I am so sorry for contacting you but no-one will listen to me. I may need to give up work which means we lose our house and can't afford to live. That sounds dramatic but it's the truth. My partner must go back in July and he has been furloughed for weeks so they won't allow [redacted] time off either.

Can you help please? I doubt I am the only one in this situation.

Kind regards

[redacted]

Sent from my iPad

14 June - DFM

From: [redacted]

Sent: Sunday, June 14, 2020 5:31:39 PM

To: Swinney J (John), MSP <John.Swinney.msp@parliament.scot>

Subject: Message from Scottish Parliament website

name:

[redacted]

address:

[redacted]

postcode:

[redacted]

email:

[\[redacted\]](#)

telephone:

message:

I am very concerned about education. I have an [redacted] child with [redacted]. [redacted] attends a state funded school. Interaction with the school has been limited to documents to read on line and questions. [redacted] has had one phone call from a teacher since lock down, only because I phoned to say [redacted] was increasingly disengaging. No videos made by [redacted] teachers. I listen to parents whose children attend private school and get 1-3 hours zoom interaction with their children daily.

I am acutely concerned hearing of a secondary school maths teacher who has to go into school for 1/2 day next week in order to prepare for the childrens return to school- not been in since lock down. Healthy. He is not overloaded with workload apparently and has time in his day to teach his own two children. Seriously! Is that all the effort that is going into expanding the school estate? State school children will have a years wasted time.

Could you not fill the sports fields with portacabins, video live teaching from their own teachers into the rooms and get volunteers to oversee extra classrooms? Young people, parents etc would volunteer to control behaviour.

Remote teaching at home, without oversight (parents working) = gaming. They are too young to understand or be responsible for the consequences.

The SNP will not be forgiven for dropping the ball so heavily with the young people, their parents and grandparents if it is not sorted out by the autumn years term

14 June - DFM

From: [redacted]

Sent: Sunday, June 14, 2020 5:31:44 PM

To: Swinney J (John), MSP <John.Swinney.msp@parliament.scot>

Subject: Scottish school closure covid19

Dear Mr Swinney,

My hand written letter to you is in the [redacted] letter box but here are the points I wish to raise with you.

- . Our school children are suffering after 12 weeks of school closure.
- . All our children have a right to full time education.
- . The part time face to face education planned for August will mean more suffering particularly for children from deprived backgrounds.
- . Increasingly the suffering of our young people is being highlighted by the media.

My question is

- . As the facts are that children are extremely unlikely to become seriously ill with the corona virus, does our Scottish government plan to change the part time arrangements in schools to more full time attendance, should the situation in Scotland improve over the next month?

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely

[redacted]

14 June – DFM

From: [redacted]

Sent: Sunday, June 14, 2020 5:44:13 PM

To: Swinney J (John), MSP <John.Swinney.msp@parliament.scot>

Subject: Return of School Risk of Transmission

Hi

I am a [redacted] in the [redacted] sector. I am extremely concerned about the return of pupils in schools. Particularly around the opinions being expressed about low risk of children passing on the virus.

Recently a school in Canada with a class of 11 pupils using distancing and hand washing and sanitiser. 1 pupil brought the virus from home and when tested 9 of the 11 children tested positive. Obviously they can. Why is no mention being made of this? A number of schools down south had to close almost as quickly as they were re opened. Anybody who works in Education knows that children, particularly young children pass on viruses.

Figures for danger of death in teachers and serious illness are obviously going to look low just now as the vast majority of us have been working at home since lockdown. There is no way effective distancing in primary schools particularly in the early years will be effective. Young children do not have great personal hygiene habits or the ability to wash effectively unless directly supervised. This seems very unlikely that every child, every time they go to the loo will have direct supervision. Please do not base policy in the misguided belief that young children will not pass this on. Of course they will.

[redacted]

Sent from my Huawei tablet

14 June – DFM

From: [redacted]

Sent: Sunday, June 14, 2020 5:13:38 PM

To: Swinney J (John), MSP <John.Swinney.msp@parliament.scot>

Subject: Return to school in August

Dear John

You don't get to decide when my children attend school in a global pandemic. I do. I make the decisions based on their safety. If I trust the measures you have in place, I'll send them. If I don't, I won't. Right now, you have a very long way to go in convincing me that the virus won't be brought into our house and kill our vulnerable [redacted].

Regarding your remarks about sending children being legally required, this all sounds very sinister and GIRFEC like. I won't hesitate to take you through [redacted] if I feel I need to do that.

Respect parents' views and stop acting like you are the father of all children in Scotland. It's disturbing!!!

Regards.

[redacted]

14 June - DFM

From: [redacted]

Sent: 14 June 2020 23:10

To: Swinney J (John), MSP <John.Swinney.msp@parliament.scot>

Subject: Education Policy

Dear Mr Swinney,

I have read and listened with growing incredulity, and concern, to the Scottish Government's position regarding the re-opening of schools. To consider 'blended learning' with only a day or two in school per week as a method of getting children back in to meaningful education would be failing our children. If the proposals that are currently being suggested are to be the model for future education it will mean, in my opinion, that all children-and in particular under privileged children- will have their academic learning detrimentally affected. Frankly, the suggestion that children will be in school for only one or two days per week for the foreseeable future is a travesty.

We know that children are unlikely to become unwell in the event that they do catch the Covid-19 virus. There is growing evidence that children are also less likely to pass on the virus if they do contract it. Given these factors, the risks to children are much lower than the adult population. We know the long-term impact of a disrupted education is profound and long-term. That is without considering the impact of lack of social interaction and meeting with friends has on our children. There is, to my mind, a very real risk that the response to the virus will damage our children far more than the virus itself. There will, of course, need to be steps taken to reduce risks to the wider population- e.g. the need to ensure parents can easily socially distance at drop off and pick up times- but there must be ways through this. In addition, schools will require additional resources (physical and staffing) if class sizes are to be smaller.

It simply cannot be beyond the government and the education authorities to look at innovation, similar to that brought to bear with the implementation of the NHS temporary hospitals which were achieved in a short space of time. Why is this not possible in education? There are very good examples in other countries who have made very good progress in getting their education systems back on track and children back in schools- such as Denmark, for instance- whose practices could be examined and adapted. I would also point out that the return of schools did not lead to a significant increase in infection rates in any country who has commenced this process. Any increase was modest and short-lived. Furthermore, there was no evidence that teachers became unwell in any great number or were more severely affected than other professionals who are "on the front-line" and in face to face contact with the public. Given this, how is it possible that so many other countries can make progress, yet we cannot? And at what cost to our children's education and well-being (physical and mental)?

Will you allow schools who are able to meet the requirements, e. g. social distancing, to open fully or is it one size fits all?

I also wonder if there is going to be a standardised "digital learning programme" across all schools? I know from speaking to parents that some schools have had comprehensive programmes in place from quite early on, whilst others have taken a while to produce a

programme of any significance. I also know of a number of children who have simply had a few sheets of work sent out, with little or no communication from the school thereafter. If this “blended model” is the future then this disparity in experience needs to be addressed urgently.

I should also like to comment on a recent statement by Edinburgh’s education vice-convenor Alison Dickie regarding blended learning and I quote:

"Lockdown has also reminded us that learning is wider than just the classroom, and this is an opportunity to realise the full potential of community learning....From our youth workers and After School Clubs, to a range of third partners and community organisations, all have a part to play in this recovery process."

Of course, extra-curricular activities have always been important part of a child's learning and development and should continue to be so. However, the idea that that youth workers and after school clubs are a suitable replacement for a significant part of the academic education which takes place during normal full-time education, seems misguided at best, and is deeply concerning. It is also my understanding that a full time education is [Monday to Friday](#), not the 4 days proposed by many schools.

Ms Dickie's statement would also seem to suggest that home learning or agencies other than schools are better at education than our previous full time education system. If not, surely you have to accept that this situation is damaging to our children’s education? I have to wonder if Covid-19 is being used as a cover for saving money from the education Budget.

In regards to the governments position in relation to the request that employers be considerate in allowing people to work from home where possible, I think this is overly simplistic. Many employers may wish to be as flexible as possible, and some will be able to be so, but there is a significant possibility that many employers will need their staff back at work as the country starts to open up. In addition, how can parents both supervise and help children with education whilst simultaneously devoting their attention to working from home? The quality of one, or both, of those activities will surely be negatively impacted. How long can an employer be expected to tolerate under performance in an employee working from home who is also trying to look after children and assist with home schooling? And what happens if employers insist there is a requirement to return to the workplace? It may mean that a parent will require to give up their job to provide child care / home schooling. Will children of key workers still be allowed back to school on a full time basis? If not, what proposals do you have in place to allow key worker parents to continue working?

I am saddened by the overly cautious approach to the future provision of education and the significant and long-lasting damage being inflicted upon the children of this country. We need to be innovative, pro-active and positive. It is to my dismay that this seems unlikely to be the case when it comes to one of the most important aspects of society- the education and well-being of our children.

Yours Sincerely,

[redacted]

15 June 2020 - DFM

I am writing to express my disappointment with educational services within [redacted], Scotland. I understand that these are unprecedented times however my children like all other children in Scotland have now been out of school for 12 weeks. They are aged [redacted] and are the children of key workers so are managing their school work largely unaided. My [redacted] year old has missed [redacted] transition to high school along with all the fun things that go alongside leaving primary school and my [redacted] old has started [redacted] Nat 5 year without a timetable and next to no contact with his teachers. This is something that we have accepted as we presumed that work was going on behind the scenes to ensure that once the school year resumed in August, education would have adapted in order to provide children with their rightful education. I was horrified to learn that when the children return to school they will be in school for only one day a week.

From what I can see there has been little to no adaptation. The removal of desks and the placement of tape on the floor while insisting that children remain at home is not adaptation. I watched the health service admirably transform itself almost overnight in order to deal with this health crisis. As a staff nurse I watched colleagues who had not worked on wards for over 10 years return to the wards without question whilst others came out of retirement. Extra wards and critical care units were created and healthcare workers moved out of their family homes in order to care for others. Many of whom are low paid.

I don't know if the lack of adaptation lies with teaching staff or higher up and to be honest I don't care, what I do care about is the children, many of whom are at risk, not from this virus but from the emotional and social aspects of not being in school.

I realise that children must maintain a social distance within school but if space is an issue why is extra space not being found? Temporary classrooms could be created in portacabins within the school grounds or in unused community buildings such as sports centres/community centres/churches.

If staffing is an issue why is extra staff not being found? Why are all teaching staff who have left the profession in the last 3 years not being written to as doctors and nurses were for healthcare? Why are supply teachers not being asked to take on full time contracts? Why are final year teaching students not qualifying early? Why are we not asking for volunteers to go into schools, as we did with hospitals, to assist with ensuring social distancing is maintained in lunch halls and playgrounds?

If technology is an issue why is extra IT not being installed? Why can't a teacher's lesson be streamed into several classrooms, whilst students are supervised and assisted by a teaching assistant in one of the previously created temporary classrooms?

If fear is an issue why are teachers not reminded of the science which indicates that transmission from child to adult is rare and if that does not allay their fears then why not provide them with PPE?

Why is nothing being done?

By the time the children return in August schools will have been shut for 6 months. This should have been plenty of time for education to adapt and it seems disgraceful that it hasn't. It is distressing to see how easy it has been for the educational system to turn its back on children appearing only to view them as an infection risk rather than children with individual needs.

Children are the least at risk from this virus yet seem to be paying the biggest price. I look forward to your response and hearing how the points I have made will be addressed.

[redacted]

15 June 2020 - DFM

Dear Mr Swinney,

As a parent, I wish to express my concern at the impact that current plans will have on the welfare and education of the children of Scotland.

The current position in Scotland, with primary schools being closed from March until August, is already having a huge mental, social, emotional and educational impact on our children. From an educational perspective, it is well recognised by educators that a child's educational attainment is worse after the summer holidays than before, and the

5 month break, for many children, will result in educational disadvantages that may never be rectified. In addition to the educational difficulties, the impact on the welfare of the children across our region cannot be

underestimated. For many children, school is their "safe place". This has been removed, with no hope of return for

many months and even then on a very part-time basis. Countless children living in deprivation get themselves up and

out to school because it is a warm building, with the promise of a warm meal, from someone who might be kind to

them and notice them for a while. Many children will find the proposed return lacking in routine and consistency.

Concerns about the extended impact of Covid-19, such as children being exposed to alcoholism and domestic

abuse, have already been raised. Some of these children are not known to services and may not easily be identified

as priority cases.

The coronavirus pandemic has been, and remains, very difficult for all aspects of society. For children in particular,

who are unlikely to understand the rationale behind the current restrictions, their life has simply been shrunk. Home

schooling is not equal for all, due to both parental work commitments and deprivation. The provision offered for

home schooling by schools and teachers to children has varied greatly. We have no reason to believe that this level of

inequality and disparity in home-school support would be rectified under the current proposals.

The WHO has said the best place for children is in school. Paediatric departments across Scotland have seen tiny

numbers of COVID positive cases and no mortality has occurred in the under 15 years age group in Scotland. The

Public Health England report last week confirmed that children are not significantly affected by Covid-19. The

RCPCH's summary of the evidence available worldwide on covid-19 in children (updated weekly) suggests that, as

far as we can know from the limited evidence currently available, children are both unlikely to become seriously

unwell with covid-19 and unlikely to spread the condition even if carrying it. The government's 'strategic framework

for reopening schools' also recognises the weakness of the evidence in support of schools remaining closed and

states that a minority of the Chief Medical Officer's Advisory Group felt that "once the timing was appropriate to

enable opening of schools in any form, physical distancing in classrooms may not be a necessary measure and that

fully re-opening schools should be considered." We would like to express our support for this view and our desire

for all children to be fully educated and not further disadvantaged by this pandemic.

Locally, independent schools have indicated that they will be resuming schooling, in school, full time.

Their smaller

class sizes and larger facilities enable this. Our state educated children will be the victims of significant social and educational inequality under the current proposals. Even if my child does not fall behind her peers, surely when everything is back to normal there will be a significant amount of time spent helping other children who have been unable to do their at home learning to catch up therefore it will have a detrimental effect on her education in future.

Given that the Scottish schools do not return for two months and the early hopeful signs of falling rates of covid-19, why is the first position not for all schools to assume they will fully re-open as normal in August? This should surely be our first option, with preparations simultaneously made for a back-up plan of maximal schooling as safely as possible, should a second wave of covid-19 hit. In the event that there is a second wave and full re-opening is not possible, plans could be put in place now to create temporary classrooms in local community or commercial spaces.

Could retired teachers or teaching assistants be called upon to help, in the same way that retired NHS workers have been asked to return? Given that the NHS was able to create and staff temporary hospitals in a few weeks, one wonders why the same cannot be done to ensure that education can be offered on a full time basis for all of our children. It is difficult to see how parents will be able to return to work, without normal schooling and childcare in place. I am currently on furlough as my workplace was looking for volunteers, and I volunteered due to the 6am starts and 10.30pm finishes I was having to undertake to manage to hit deadlines, whilst also looking after [redacted]. It is not possible for both myself and my husband to work at the same time and care for [redacted] old. I know several people who are close to burnout due to the strain of home schooling and carrying out a full time job from home. It is absolutely not sustainable to carry this out for over a year.

I understand the concerns of both teachers and parents about returning to the classroom and the need to comply with social distancing measures. However, many children and staff have been in keyworker school and nursery hubs throughout this pandemic. The teaching and nursery staff who have facilitated this deserve recognition and thanks. They also provide a potentially valuable resource in exploring how covid-19 has impacted those children and staff already in close proximity to one another. Anecdotally, local hubs report not using PPE or enforcing social distancing amongst children, and yet low rates of covid-19 amongst staff and pupils. Research to confirm or refute this could easily be undertaken in the hubs currently running, to provide a guide as to what we can expect when schools go back? Also schools in the Netherlands are back at full capacity with no social distancing taking place between children and there has been no spike of infections, the same is also true of Denmark and Sweden.

I ask you to act on behalf of all of our children, a vulnerable group who do not easily have a voice of their own. The long-term impact of continued school closures will have immeasurable effects on the social, emotional and educational welfare of all our children and potentially wider reaching consequences. School is not and never was, just about education. Let us use that knowledge to drive some sensible decision-making. There are risks in respect of Covid-19. However there are also very real, current risks in moving forwards with what is currently proposed in

regard to schooling. We would be remiss as parents if we did not raise these concerns. We urge you to aim for the full re-opening of schools and full-time education of all children in Scotland from August, if the current covid-19 case numbers continue to fall. The aim of lockdown was to prevent the NHS being overwhelmed and this has been achieved. We must now consider how to minimise the negative impact of this situation for all of our children.

Yours sincerely,
[redacted]

15 June 2020 - DFM

Dear John,

I'm sure you will have many emails regarding the schools returning and difficulties around that.

Whilst the the past few months have been challenging for my youngest child who has missed out on sitting [redacted] Nat 5 exams, a further year of school upheaval will in my opinion cause a generation of harm to school pupils.

I am an [redacted] who continued to work while having a [redacted] at home. In the hospital we have had to deal with risk throughout this pandemic . I work in [redacted] and my work involves close contact with patients and colleagues, but we continued to treat and rehab our patients throughout this , while many colleagues had reduced workload.

We will never be able to eliminate all risk but I think the schools and councils must be less risk adverse. The wearing of masks and regular hand hygiene for pupils would minimise this . Pupils could wipe down their own desk prior to sitting and on leaving - as I do. At risk pupils and those with at risk parents could be schooled by video link if required, but the vast majority should return to school. The harm being done to pupils Mental health while not at school is yet to be revealed, but pupils from vulnerable social groups the damage will be more instantly apparent. As my [redacted] said ' school is often the only respite children get from their volatile home situation.

Whilst many are adhering to the distancing , I am aware that many young people are not they are spending time together so will have already mixed over the summer months before school returns. The disease as you know tends to pass through young people with very little impact so I and many of my friends and colleagues believe they should return. The damage Covid will do will be negligible compared to all the other harms they will now face because they are not being educated full time. I understand this is unprecedented in terms of how to manage it and there is a need for caution but we must also be sensible and look at all risk not just Covid. I would urge that if decisions are made and that they must also be able to be quickly reversed and limited schooling doesn't not impact any longer than it has to. I have been made aware that private schools are fully on video link for classes - which will cause further disparity .

Kind regards
[redacted]

15 June 2020 - DFM

Good Morning,

We return to school next term with the blended learning model and restrictions on how we can deliver practical activities and it is not clear for how long this situation will remain.

I am very concerned that it will be almost impossible to get through the normal course content for the SQA Higher and Advanced Higher Biology courses. With the best will in the world blended learning just will not be able to replicate normal classroom learning and teaching sufficiently and I think that is naive to believe otherwise.

I am also very concerned that in a Biology department (Chemistry or Physics department) in which high numbers of pupils take N5/H/AH under the current guidelines for return it will not be feasible to carry out the assignments or AH Projects without imposing a huge workload burden on staff.

This is a matter of some urgency as we have limited time left this session to plan ahead to August - it will not be fair on anyone to delay decisions and announcements and needs to be addressed now. Please can you reassure me that this is will happen.

Best wishes,

[redacted]

15 June - DFM

From: [redacted]
Sent: 15 June 2020 13:47
To: Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills
<DFMCSE@gov.scot>
Subject: Schools.

Dear Sir,

My previous email did not make clear my idea about school opening arrangements. As I said, pupils have no chance of making up the lost classes due to the school closures. What was not clear was that schools could go back when possible and proceed to the end of the current year.

Due to the fact that all pupils have missed much of the present year's schooling I would have all pupils go back to school for next year at the usual start date but repeat the present year instead of going on to the next year.

This would not disadvantage more able pupils but would advantage the weaker pupils. It would be a win win situation.

Students with provisional acceptance to university could leave school if they pass the final school exams but could also repeat the school year if necessary.

Next year's primary intake added to the present year one would make that a large class but could be divided as normal and an extra teacher taken on. This large class would require this extra teacher in all years as they go through school but the intakes each year after next would be back to normal.

Regards,
[redacted]

Sent from my iPad

15 June – DFM

From: [redacted]
Sent: 15 June 2020 10:38
To: Swinney J (John), MSP <John.Swinney.msp@parliament.scot>
Subject: Message from Scottish Parliament website

name:
[redacted]

address:
[redacted]

postcode:
[redacted]

email:
[redacted]

telephone:
[redacted]

message:

My name is [redacted] and I [redacted]. I have been a member of the school parent councils every year that my children have been at school.. I acknowledge that I am in the minority of engaged parents.

I work full time as does my [redacted] and I am increasingly looking after my [redacted]. As you can imagine I have my hands full.

I saw the Politics Scotland program yesterday and I want to challenge the fact that you seem to have deferred all decision making relating to returning to local authorities. I was at a parent partnership meeting last week where we were told that if the school can't secure buses to bring children from out of town then the whole of the school would not reopen. Regardless of whether the majority of pupils live here and could still benefit from their 2.5 hours; the 'equity' around that some may not make it to school prevents the majority being taught. Regarding summer schooling to catch up, this can't happen because the unions 'wouldn't like it' and you talk about taking advantage of the digital opportunities to transform delivery of education, but when I asked whether teachers could video their lessons I was told that this isn't something that all teacher are happy doing because some of them are 'old in the tooth'.

Our school is no different to other schools and I do believe that the head is doing everything she can under the circumstances, but I believe that the circumstances have to change. How have SG engaged with unions? Have you made financial provision for additional staff to come out of retirement? You cannot leave it to cash strapped local authorities to find this money – it has to come from government and

please don't tell me that this needs to come from Westminster. Education is a devolved power in Scotland.

I can hardly find the time to write this, I should be working- from home, my WIFI connection is creaking under the strain, my children are currently eating breakfast and in a second I will finish this and go and set their work for the day, I also need to feed back to the [redacted] school about where we are up to with the work that has already been set for last week. All that around my full time day job which is not without its stress. Yet in the programme you said that only 8% of parents were unhappy with this situation. This figure is irrelevant without first considering how many parents engaged with the survey.

When my [redacted] go to [redacted] school they will have 2.5 hours a week in a class of 8 children. This new blended model therefore relies on me to deliver the other 22.5 hours. I have no answer to you only that I simply cannot do it. And the outlook for Scotland's future, our children's success and our economy as well as my mental health is incredibly bleak.

[redacted]

15 June - DFM

Dear Cabinet Secretary,

Please find attached a letter from **Bruce Crawford MSP** in relation to a constituent matter.

If you require any additional information or I can be of further assistance please do not hesitate to contact me.

Kind regards
[redacted]

Attachment:

Dear Cabinet Secretary,

Blended learning

I am writing in respect of the above matter having received representation from constituents.

Constituents have raised concerns that the proposed model of blended learning may last the whole of the next school year.

They are concerned that the mental health of children and working mothers/parents to have to deal with this will suffer along with their children's progression through the school year.

They are asking if there has been any centralised guidance issued to schools and Councils? Concerns have been stated that the Scottish government are making each region reinvent the wheel when joined up thinking and collaboration would have very much helped ease this transition.

I would welcome any response to the above matters and any additional comments you may wish to make.

I thank you for your attention to this important matter and look forward to your response.

Yours sincerely,

15 June – DFM

----- Forwarded message -----

From: [redacted]

Date: Mon, 15 Jun 2020, 08:53

Subject: Please read and see attached article

To: <John.Swinney.msp@parliament.scot>

Dear Mr Swinney

As parents, and especially with a [redacted] about to start [redacted] we wish to express our concern at the impact that current plans will have on the welfare and education of the children of Scotland.

The current position in Scotland, with primary schools being closed from March until August, is already having a huge mental, social, emotional and educational impact on our children. From an educational perspective, it is well recognised by educators that a child's educational attainment is worse after the summer holidays than before, and the 5 month break, for many children, will result in educational disadvantages that may never be rectified. Our [redacted] attenders, due to start P1 in August 2020 will miss out on a key time for interpersonal skills, language and literacy development, which is very disappointing, and something from which they may never fully recover. They have also had no transition from nursery and some may not have even met their teachers!

The government's own 'strategic framework for reopening schools' recognises that temporary school closures have been shown to negatively influence a child's educational achievement, both short and long term.

In addition to the educational difficulties, the impact on the welfare of the children across our region cannot be underestimated. For many children, school is their "safe place". This has been removed, with no hope of return for many months and even then on a very part-time basis. Countless children living in deprivation get themselves up and out to school because it is a warm building, with the promise of a warm meal, from someone who might be kind to them and notice them for a while. Many children will find the proposed return lacking in routine and consistency. Concerns about the extended impact of Covid-19, such as children being exposed to alcoholism and domestic abuse, have already been raised. Some of these children are not known to services and may not easily be identified as priority cases.

The coronavirus pandemic has been, and remains, very difficult for all aspects of society. For children in particular, who are unlikely to understand the rationale behind the current restrictions, their life has simply been shrunk. Home schooling is not equal for all, due to both parental work commitments and deprivation. The provision offered for home schooling by schools and teachers to children has varied greatly. We have no reason to believe that this level of inequality and disparity in home-school support would be rectified under the current proposals.

The WHO has said the best place for children is in school. Paediatric departments across Scotland have seen tiny numbers of COVID positive cases and no mortality has occurred in the under 15 years age group in Scotland. The Public Health England report last week confirmed that children are not significantly affected by Covid-19. The RCPCH's summary of the evidence available worldwide on covid-19 in children (updated weekly) suggests that, as far as we can know from the limited evidence currently available, children are both unlikely to become seriously unwell with covid-19 and unlikely to spread the condition even if carrying it. The government's 'strategic framework for reopening schools' also recognises the weakness of the evidence in support of schools remaining closed and states that a minority of the Chief Medical Officer's Advisory Group felt that "once the timing was appropriate to enable opening of schools in any form, physical distancing in classrooms may not be a necessary measure and that fully re-opening schools should be considered." We would like to express our support for this view and our desire for all children to be fully educated and not further disadvantaged by this pandemic.

Locally, independent schools have indicated that they will be resuming schooling, in school, full time. Their smaller class sizes and larger facilities enable this. Our state educated children will be the victims of significant social and educational inequality under the current proposals.

Given that the Scottish schools do not return for two months and the early hopeful signs of falling rates of covid-19, why is the first position not for all schools to assume they will fully re-open as normal in August? This should surely be our first option, with preparations simultaneously made for a back-up plan of maximal schooling as safely as possible, should a second wave of covid-19 hit. In the event that there is a second wave and full re-opening is not possible, plans could be put in place now to create temporary classrooms in local community or commercial spaces. Could retired teachers or teaching assistants be called upon to help, in the same way that retired NHS workers have been asked to return? Given that the NHS was able to create and staff temporary hospitals in a few weeks, one wonders why the same cannot be done to ensure that education can be offered on a full time basis for all of our children. It is difficult to see how parents will be able to return to work, without normal schooling and childcare in place.

We understand the concerns of both teachers and parents about returning to the classroom and the need to comply with social distancing measures. However, many children and staff have been in keyworker school and nursery hubs throughout this pandemic. The teaching and nursery staff who have facilitated this deserve recognition and thanks. They also provide a potentially valuable resource in exploring how covid-19 has impacted those children and staff already in close proximity to one another. Anecdotally, local hubs report not using PPE or enforcing social distancing amongst children, and yet low rates of covid-19 amongst staff and pupils. Research to confirm or refute this could easily be undertaken in the hubs currently running, to provide a guide as to what we can expect when schools go back?

We ask you to act on behalf of all of our children, a vulnerable group who do not easily have a voice of their own. The long-term impact of continued school closures will have immeasurable effects on the social, emotional and educational welfare of all our children and potentially wider reaching consequences. School is not and never was, just about education. Let us use that knowledge to drive some sensible decision-making. There are risks in respect of Covid-19. However there are also very real, current risks in moving forwards with what is

currently proposed in regard to schooling. We would be remiss as parents if we did not raise these concerns.

We urge you to aim for the full re-opening of schools and full-time education of all children in Scotland from August, if the current covid-19 case numbers continue to fall. The aim of lockdown was to prevent the NHS being overwhelmed and this has been achieved. We must now consider how to minimise the negative impact of this situation for all of our children.

Please see below a link that has some firm evidence and suggest school going back it better than them not going back

<https://www.bluezones.com/2020/06/covid-19-straight-answers-from-top-epidemiologist-who-predicted-the-pandemic/>

Yours sincerely,

[redacted]

15 June – DFM

From: [redacted]

Sent: 15 June 2020 23:51

To: [redacted]; [redacted]; [redacted]; [redacted];

Ash.Denham.msp@parliament.scot; John.Swinney.msp@parliament.scot

Subject: Return to school plans

I'm writing to add my voice to the increasing number of people from our own community, our city and across the country who are extremely concerned by the proposals being communicated about schooling From August 11th.

[redacted] council are making a huge mistake if they stick with the proposed approach. This will totally fail our youngsters who have already been disadvantaged hugely. The scientific evidence is showing there is a small risk of infection for children and with appropriate levels of hygiene, temperature checking and cleaning the possibility to increase the number of days attending school should be possible.

There are many Positive and innovative ideas being suggested which seem reasonable suggestions. From using other council owned spaces, to opening 5 days with deep cleaning taking place after 3pm (there's 18 hours available until the next lot of kids would arrive). The current suggestion to close school on Friday is frankly unbelievable - cutting the available time available in school by 1/5. Where is the logic in that decision?

Businesses across the world have had to react swiftly and dynamically in order to continue operating - Schools should be no different. Technology exists that makes online classes a possibility with Some schools, colleges and universities already adopting these Successfully.

I'd urge the Scottish government and [redacted] council to take stock of the strength of feeling on this matter and urgently rethink the approach.

I'm hoping you can help ensure this gets to the necessary people in the Scottish govern and in [redacted] council.

Sent from my iPhone

15 June - DFM

Email from Keith Brown MSP, followed by attachment as referenced within

Dear John

As MSP for Clackmannanshire and Dunblane, I have been contacted by my constituent [redacted] a resident of [redacted], who wished to share [redacted] observations over the current provision of and Scottish Government's planned resumption of education services in August 2020.

I have attached for your attention, a copy of the email [redacted] sent to me, detailing [redacted] current experience, the varying impacts [redacted] feels the existing provision is having and the implications for a more long lasting. negative effect she believes the Scottish Government's planned service provision may indeed have on both pupils and parents/carers, particularly so for working mothers who [redacted] believes, will be left with little choice but to remove themselves from their work places altogether to enable the proposed blended learning approach to education to be delivered.

In light of this correspondence from [redacted] I would be grateful for your consideration of the issues [redacted] has raised, the solutions [redacted] feels should be considered and I look forward to your response, which I will share with my constituent.

Yours sincerely Keith Brown MSP Clackmannanshire & Dunblane Constituency

Attachment

Email from Constituent – [redacted] – 15.6.20

I'm writing to you to give you my experience of lockdown with young children and being a full-time working [redacted]. Also, to express my frustration about the current plans to put on a reduced school provision from August to December.

My partner and I work full time. Since the lockdown started, we have worked from home and taken on the responsibility of home schooling. We agree with the measures that have been taken and happy to comply with them. But I do not agree with the plan to open schools part time from August till December 20. We welcome measures to ensure there is no second wave of the virus, but I see other risks which must be assessed as well as the risk from the virus. I'm very concerned about (1) the impact on our children's social and emotional development, (2) our children's mental health, (3) the immense pressure on families, (4) the fixation on online learning as a suitable substitute, (5) the impact on gender diversity in the work place and (6) I offer some suggestions as to how we might open schools full time and maintain efforts to ensure there is no second wave.

Firstly, the damage to children's social and emotional development and the impact on their mental health. We are already seeing in our [redacted] child how the prolonged period of social isolation has impacted on [redacted] mental health. For the first two months [redacted] really enjoyed the freedom to explore [redacted] own ideas. But, after 2 months [redacted] began to change. From being a happy and imaginative child, [redacted] has become withdrawn, anxious and angry. [redacted] doesn't want to socialise, despite now being able to meet up with one other family for a walk. [redacted] does not want to get out of bed in the mornings and she [redacted] trouble falling asleep at night. Several years ago [redacted] had a stutter which has now returned. I put this change in behaviour down to the prolonged period of social isolation. I think [redacted] will be able to

recover but if limited interaction continues [redacted] situation might become more damaging. We are, of course, doing everything we can to support [redacted] right now, but I know that only returning to full time school will resolve it.

As someone who works full time and in stable employment it would be easy to say we have the privilege of earning enough to be able to pay for items that could make home schooling more bearable. Our experience is that, despite having a decent income it is impossible to give our children the social learning they desperately need at this stage in their development. My experience of this lockdown is that no amount of money can buy social interaction.

It is also impossible for us as parents to replicated what a teacher does. The relationship dynamic between parent and child is different to that of teacher and the child. It is also impossible to home school our children and work full time concurrently. Children need our attention and focus to be able to support them with their learning. I can imagine that for other families facing economic hardship the stresses may be much worse. Parents are already under immense pressure, many do not have families nearby to be able to help with childcare and many will not be able to afford to pay for the additional childcare. These pressures must be including in any risk assessments being done right now.

There are a mass of online activities and classes put on by schools, well-meaning celebrities and other organisations. The fixation on the use of online learning as a solution right now is quite overwhelming and it encourages our young children to be passive. This might work for secondary school children but I feel this is very detrimental to primary school children. It is depriving them of learning vital social skills and opportunities for active learning.

I am also concerned about how this will impact on gender diversity in the workplace. I feel like I am expected to do 5 jobs in one right now which might be manageable for a few months, but it is not sustainable longer term. Part time school will force many women ([redacted]) to either reduce their hours at work, reducing their income or even stop work all together in order to ensure their children's wellbeing. Limiting their career progression in the long term. It is extremely disappointing that the Scottish Government does not seem to have taken this into account, with their focus on equality. We do not want to lose the progress of the last 40 years.

Going forward I see a raft of possible options not just the blended learning currently being planned for. I think it is unofficially acknowledged that it will be impossible to maintain physical distancing between primary aged children regardless of the class size. Can I suggest we look at alternatives which would include returning all children to their classes, full time and focus on other measures such as; keeping class groups separate; employing play coordinators to work in schools; employing forest school teachers; very high hygiene measures in schools; minimising touch items such as needing to touch doors and daily 'parent declarations' of a child temperature.

It must be possible to balance both the risk from the virus with the need to return our children to full time education. My plea to you as a parent is that you work on several options that include opening the schools full time ASAP. I would be happy to assist as a parent if the SG needs an injection of new ideas. Please do everything possible to open schools full time in August or as soon as possible thereafter.

Many thanks for taking the time to read my concerns

[redacted]

16 June – DFM

Dear Mr Swinney, I am the [redacted] of [redacted] children a [redacted]; my eldest child is currently in [redacted] and my youngest is in [redacted] attached to [redacted] school which is [redacted]. I wanted to write to you to express my concern about the plans for August to socially distance children at school and therefore only have them attend for part of the week. Our children have already lost over a whole term due to this pandemic and most parents have been supportive of the need to do this up to a point. I feel that the time is coming that we must get back to normal - not "a new normal". Children will spend just two days of time in school with the rest of the work to be done at home. I think that this is simply not acceptable. Two days (if this is the planned model) is not enough time to grasp a new concept to them take home and learn. In addition, I feel strongly that primary age children are too young for self-directed learning. The digital options that are being offered are not sufficient and there is also the devastating lack of social contact to bear in mind. The current situation and even the plans for recovery are in direct contravention of the rights of the child to an education. We built at record speed, new hospitals and mobilised retired NHS staff and redeployed staff. Why can we not do the same for education? I'd like to know how you will be consulting the public on all of this moving forward. I know that many people share my thoughts that we should not be socially distancing children at all. The risks of doing so far outweigh the small risk of children contracting the virus; I say this as a doctor who keeps myself informed of the current medical literature. I would urge you to reconsider the plans to socially distance children and get everyone back as normal in August. Or at least consult widely with the public on this as an initial step. We have lost a term of education. Please, I implore you do not let our children suffer any longer.

Yours sincerely,

[redacted]

16 June 2020 – DFM

Dear Mr Swinney

RE: Mental health and economic impact of lock-down on families of school-age children.

I write to implore your consideration of the tremendous impact the shutting of schools is having on families of schoolage

children – from both an economic and a mental health perspective. From our experience, and speaking with

other parents, many are struggling through the current conditions.

We have embraced the efforts to minimise the spread of COVID-19, following the guidelines and restricting

interactions. After three months of trying to balance home-schooling with other duties, coupled with the bleak

outlook, many parents are close to breaking point – especially those trying to work 8-hour days as well as homeschooling

and normal household duties. The impact on us as parents is manifesting in our children and some parents

are worried about high levels of anxiety and even depression in children. We strongly believe these symptoms and

long-term impacts would be mitigated through an engaging, social, learning environment. These thoughts are backed

by over 100 psychological specialists in an open letter – calling for minimal social distancing measures for children:

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/health-53037702>

The current school proposals are painting a concerning future. Four days of school every 3 weeks is unreasonable –

this focussed, conservative tactic is myopic. Focussing purely on the school and coronavirus guidance does not

appropriately apply risk assessment across our society as an integrated system. The strategic goal, of which

schooling and childcare are essential features, is to protect our community. That must be a balanced, risk assessment,

based not only on the coronavirus risks, but the risks to children and families.

This risk assessment should also include the dramatic increases in mental illness currently manifesting. Parents are not

copng. Without childcare & education, we enter a vicious cycle which will bring down our economy faster than

coronavirus. We cannot work sufficiently, we are constantly being interrupted, and we are falling behind our

colleagues who do not have children – increasing our stress and anxiety. This impacts our ability to focus, think

rationaly and make decisions, increasing the likelihood of human error and poor performance. Further exacerbating

the problem and degrading family cohesion as parent's are driven to provide for their family. Without childcare, many

parents will be forced to quit work, degrading Scottish business performance, reducing spending, tax payments, and

slowing the economic recovery further. A blended-learning approach will require many parents to leave work.

On behalf of parents, I ask you to advance the release of restrictions on children and childcare. Allow them to be

close together and manage the coronavirus risk with other tactics, such as monitoring temperatures, having rules for

symptomatic children to return home. Please look to transmission data from school/nursery hubs and from schools in

other countries (e.g. France, Netherlands, Germany) who have been operating within the lockdown period. Protect

the medically vulnerable by keeping them isolated, not the entire community.

Please engage with parent groups (and seek their professional expertise), as they are your partners, not only in

education, but as economic contributors who rely on schooling and childcare and can't be expected to provide it
73% of the time (4 in-school days every 15 workdays).

This letter will be sent to the First Minister, [redacted], MSPs, Councillors, Education committees and social media groups across Edinburgh, to demonstrate support a broader risk-based approach to school and childcare in Scotland.

Regards
[redacted]

16 June 2020 – DFM

"Not good enough." First Minister's response on being told that Edinburgh schools were planning to have only 33% of children back in class at any one time when schools 're-open' in August. Words that were subsequently endorsed by yourself. What then are you doing in your dual role as Education Secretary and Constituency MSP member for the area to bring these words to the attention of the authorities in Perth and Kinross Council and specifically those responsible for the running of [redacted] School, who, I understand, are currently planning to provide only ONE day in-school education for pupils? They defend their decision by saying that "we do not have the capacity to deliver 2/3 days per week, alternate weeks or a 50:50 split." Good enough? So what are you doing to encourage them to be "creative and innovative" (the First Minister's words again), and look at alternative ways of increasing capacity, by, for example, the use of leisure facilities or public buildings. (your words), in an effort to ensure that "young people...[are] back having face-to-face teaching for 100% of the school week as soon as possible." (First Minister)? This is a national emergency which demands an extraordinary response led by the national government. It's not just that the future of the present generation of young people is at risk, but so too is the future well-being of the nation. You will not be easily forgiven if you fail to rise to the challenge.
[redacted]

16 June 2020 – DFM

Dear Mr Swinney,

>>

Our children deserve an education, the Scottish Government proposals are just not adequate to support our young people.

>>

We know that Scottish youngsters themselves have not lost their lives to Coronavirus so how can you justify forcing them to sacrifice their education and sporting ambitions?

>>

The Edinburgh 50:50 campaign are asking for half a school week's education but even this is entirely inadequate.

Please consider:

>>

Reduction or preferably removal of social distancing for schoolchildren.

>>

Take proactive steps to support education - commandeer additional teaching space - what about those closed university facilities, require property owners to assist and cover the additional costs for the schools.

>>

Use the many volunteers to assist, consider regular coronavirus testing.

>>

Follow examples from countries that have been successful in combating the spread of the coronavirus.

>>

Prioritise youngsters with National exams and if they do not receive adequate hours of teaching, tailor the exams to cover a reduced syllabus.

>>

Help the schools, and avoid just passing the problem on to the Local Authorities and criticising their efforts. We

need a National effort to give education priority. Lastly, please give some hope, what precisely are you seeking, what

needs to happen and what timetable do you anticipate before our children will get their childhoods back?

>>

Yours faithfully

>>

[redacted]

16 June – DFM

From: [redacted]

Sent: 16 June 2020 12:38

To: Cole-Hamilton A (Alex), MSP <Alex.Cole-Hamilton.msp@parliament.scot>; [redacted]; [redacted]; Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills <DFMCSE@gov.scot>; [redacted]

Cc: First Minister <firstminister@gov.scot>; christine.jardine.mp@parliament.uk

Subject: Edinburgh school hours

Dear All,

My name is [redacted] and I live in [redacted]. I am about to return to work following [redacted] leave. I work 3 days a week as an [redacted] for a [redacted] and my [redacted] works full time in [redacted]. We have [redacted] children - [redacted].

As you can imagine any attempt at homeschooling my [redacted] has been extremely challenging. We sometimes manage an hour in a day at best as I have been trying to do this alone, while looking after the [redacted], to allow my [redacted] to work from home uninterrupted. We were very much looking forward to getting my [redacted] back to school in August, even if only 50% of the time.

Last week I received a letter from [redacted] council advising that schools would be able to accommodate 33% of children at a time AND Monday to Thursday only. Whatever the model used this equates to 4 days in the classroom every 3 weeks! This is completely unacceptable and falls far short of the 50/50 blended model that the Education Secretary set as an objective. By my calculations 4 days out of a possible 15 is a more like a 25/75 split. There is absolutely NO WAY my [redacted] and I can offer my [redacted] anything like the level of education [redacted] deserves while both of us try to work and look after 2 other small children. The vast majority of local authorities are offering at least 2 days a week. Over the same 3 week period this would amount to 6 days; a third more than my [redacted] would get. A classic case of a postcode lottery.

I genuinely fear for every young person in Scotland that they may fall behind, but even more so for those in [redacted], who are missing out on more than most. I'm lucky that my [redacted] is only going into [redacted] and not looking to sit [redacted] exams this year. How is someone who is receiving a third less teaching time supposed to compete? At the very least the amount of time spent in the classroom should be the same across the whole of Scotland.

I appreciate we are trying our best to rid ourselves of this awful virus and save lives. I fully support this. What I can't support is doing this at the expense of the education of our young people. We surely can and must do better than 4 days every 3 weeks.

I'd like to see the same effort that was used to protect the NHS being put in to protecting our children's education. If that means getting creative and using

alternative buildings such as libraries or leisure centres and getting in retired staff and students to help then needs must. My [redacted] attends [redacted] where we are lucky enough to have green space almost the size of a small park. More than enough for several cabins. There must be other schools across the city that could do the same.

Unfortunately for our family the impact doesn't end there. I bumped into one of the other mums from my [redacted] class a few days ago, who is in a similar situation to myself. She also has a baby in addition to her older son. Both of us professional people but, as the part-time worker of the household, we were seriously having to consider giving up our jobs to provide full time child care to our younger children and attempt to home school the older ones.

Trying to work, home school and provide childcare to a toddler and a baby is nothing short of impossible. Paying for childcare for all 3 of my children would cost more than my take home pay and I presume grandparents will be unable help as they normally do because they are in their 70s and would have to stay socially distanced. My employer is supportive and as flexible as possible, my husband's the same. Between furlough and annual leave I might be able to cling on for a few months but no longer than that.

Even before the pandemic we had a way to go to even up the gender pay gap. If women all over the country end up forced to cut their hours or leave their employment it can only widen further.

I remain hopeful that the matter of my [redacted] classroom time can be improved before term begins in August and look forward to receiving your responses and would be grateful for any advice or help you can provide.

Best wishes,
[redacted]

16 June – DFM

FAO of John Swinney Secretary of State for Education. Dear John - thank you for your efforts and support for our young people and education during the current Covid 19 pandemic. I have been most impressed and commend the Scottish Government's communication with people of Scotland in managing the current pandemic. As a [redacted] in Scotland I am concerned about about the research findings highlighted by the British Science Association regarding communication about Covid 19 with young people. Along side the central task of reopening schools in August the Scottish Government should also look forward and take note of the findings in the research link below to begin an immediate communication and dialogue with our young people to ensure they have an age related knowledge of Covid 19 and initiate discussions to prepare them for return to a very different school experience in August. This should bein parallel to preparation and advice to Education Authorities and Schools. I am happy to be contacted to further discuss this matter. Thank you [redacted]
<https://www.britishtscienceassociation.org/news/new-survey-results-almost-9-in-10-young-people-feel-scientistsand-politicians-are-leaving-them-out-of-the-covid-19-conversation>

16 June - DFM

From: [redacted]

Sent: 16 June 2020 11:11

To: Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills

<DFMCSE@gov.scot>

Subject: Infrared thermometers at schools

Hello Cabinet Secretary,

Willie Coffey has been asked by a constituent to suggest to you to consider requiring the use of infrared thermometer every morning at schools, before entry to school grounds.

In the Scottish Government's school re-opening document, it is clearly states that "Parents, carers and school settings do not need to take children's temperatures every morning."

Has the Scottish Government discussed or answered questions on the use of digital thermometers as a diagnostic tool for coronavirus?

In particular, Willie's constituent has said "I am concerned that schools are not being supplied with infrared thermometers to check pupils and staff and visitors before entry to the premises. Has this been overlooked or could it be a cost issue with the education department? if someone's temperature is high then access could be denied and save a lot of people from self isolating for two weeks. I see this as a weak link in our struggle with COVID19."

I have looked at various health reports, which identify limitations with infrared thermometers as a diagnostic tool.

- Some people with COVID19 don't have a temperature. I've read that between 30% and 66% of those diagnosed with COVID19 did *not* have a fever.
- Over the counter medicines can reduce a fever, which would mean that a person could be ill, but would not show a fever.

Has there been any direct questioning of the Scottish Government about the use of thermometers in diagnosis?

Thank you for your guidance,

Keep well,

[redacted]

16 June - DFM

From: MacGregor F (Fulton), MSP <Fulton.MacGregor.msp@parliament.scot>
Sent: 17 June 2020 17:26
To: Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills <DFMCSE@gov.scot>; Swinney J (John), MSP <John.Swinney.msp@parliament.scot>
Subject: FW: Opportunity in Education

Dear Deputy First Minister

I would be grateful if you and your ministerial team could give some consideration to the contents of this email? Seems like an interesting concept and I wonder if it is something that would be beneficial moving forward.

Yours, Fulton MacGregor

From: [redacted]
Sent: 16 June 2020 10:13
To: MacGregor F (Fulton), MSP <Fulton.MacGregor.msp@parliament.scot>
Subject: Opportunity in Education

Hi Fulton

I am writing to you to ask for your help in promoting a platform we have developed, into the education market in Scotland.

Here's the story :

One of our businesses, based in [redacted] is called [redacted] [redacted] supply foreign teachers (from Spain/Ireland) into the state education sector, primarily in England
Three years ago we recognised there was no standard platform or resources that could be used by a teacher, coming into the country, to deliver high quality education to pupils. [redacted] partnered with Alex Russell, a National Leader of Education in England, and the head of the Bourne Education Trust <https://www.bourne.education/384/message-from-the-ceo-alex-russell>

Together we created a platform of in sequence, high quality lessons, following the English curriculum, Uteach lessons.

Here is a short summary of it -

<https://transcripts.gotomeeting.com/#/s/0d760cd2e6401622d5be3ad50be859cbef0cffa65ecd45d90d793393f3ce224f3>

We developed a unique platform that allows a teacher to alter the standard lesson, which they then upload and are given a code to issue to pupils so the pupils can in turn access it
This platform is developed, populated, and is being used extensively in England by teachers.

The advantage of our platform is that there is one lesson for each topic, so pupils can instantly access a relevant, high quality lesson. With TES, the most commonly used platform

for resources, there are any number of lessons per topic, with no quality control. Children can easily find an out of date or substandard lesson that they use because it is free

We could easily duplicate the platform to the Scottish market, in time for the new school year, by doing 2 things :

- Adapt our English lessons to the Scottish curriculum
- Narrate the lessons, so they can be used to teach a child remotely

The big issue for parents in the coming school year is the reduction of class teaching time, with pupils having their time reduced by 60% due to restricted class sizes. However the teacher is still working full time, teaching one third of the class at a time, so has no spare time to offer virtual teaching

We believe our already existing and operational platform has the ability to offer this to pupils. Access to this can be bought by parents for £2.50 per week, or £100 per year, for a complete curriculum of narrated in sequence high quality lessons to supplement their limited class time. We are happy to negotiate on cost depending on the take up.

Here is an example of a narrated lesson from our platform -
https://youtu.be/nWh_gCv5M-M

In the first instance could we have a quick call to discuss how we could progress to talking to someone from the education department, to assess the viability of our platform?

Best Regards

[redacted]

16 June - DFM

From: [redacted] **On Behalf Of** Briggs M (Miles), MSP

Sent: 16 June 2020 12:44

To: Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills <DFMCSE@gov.scot>

Subject: Return to school

Dear Cabinet Secretary,

I am receiving a significant amount of correspondence from [redacted] constituents about the plans for schools to return in August.

Parents contacting me have a wide range of concerns but all state that the indicated amount of time- perhaps only one day per week- their children are due to spend at school being taught is far too low and is unsustainable. It will also make it incredibly difficult for working parents to return to work. Serious worries are being voiced about the impact on children's mental health and social development as well as education.

Many constituents wish to see the Scottish Government provide a standard, guaranteed, national minimum of 50% school time for all children and national, standardised best practice for online learning for the other 50% of learning. They want councils to make much greater use of other public buildings and other buildings for classrooms.

I would be grateful if you could address the concerns of constituents and parents and set out what additional action the Scottish government will take to ensure children can get much more teaching time when they return to school and what support the Scottish Government will be making available to councils to help achieve this.

Thank you for your attention in this matter and I look forward to your response.

Kind regards,

Miles Briggs MSP

16 June – DFM

Dear Mr Swinney, after many sleepless nights I have decided that rather than procrastinating I should email and share my concerns, this is not an email trying to get my child back to school or afraid to let my child return its far from it all I want is to consider how missing 21 weeks of education will impact on their future. I have [redacted] children, one who is [redacted] and has [redacted] a [redacted] who has just started [redacted]). My [redacted] old has worked so hard in [redacted] education and is academically able and should have the ability to study at university level. [redacted] would like to be an accountant and we are encouraging [redacted] in this, however [redacted] has to work hard and we are so worried that education at the moment will have a negative impact on [redacted] and thousands like [redacted] in achieving their full academic potential. [redacted] needs to be taught [redacted] needs to be in a classroom learning, Both [redacted] parents are key workers so [redacted] doesn't have a parent at home to help, I am a health visitor working full time and during all my spare time I am trying to keep [redacted] afloat but I am not a teacher and I quickly identified my weakness in maths and chemistry. Every week [redacted] gets work sent out and [redacted] completes it and returns it but I worry how much is understood and retained. [redacted] like many other children is at a disadvantage due to COVID and I understand this is out with our control [redacted] is also disadvantaged that both [redacted] parents work and [redacted] is homeschooling [redacted] [redacted] peers have parents who are teachers and able to school their child in the missing curriculum. I speak to teachers who are reluctant to return to work due to their fears and I understand this as I have these fears myself every time I leave the house to attend my place of work but education is so important and at this transition point where they will be studying for [redacted] national 5 exams and will be a pivotal point in their education I worry we are going to fail them. Will there be huge chunks of their education missing, will they be ready to sit these exams, how will they when each school is delivering education in a different way. All that I am asking is that we be prepared and intervene early to look at how these children are academically assessed. In Scotland they will be expected to sit prelims in January but they will undoubtedly not have accessed all the necessary learning. I am aware that schools are due to return on 11.8.2020 but to a very reduced timetable and whilst they are at home who will be providing the home schooling as the teachers will be back full time in the classroom with smaller class sizes. I know this is a small concern to many with lives being lost daily and I understand this as I work for the NHS, but not achieving the academic potential can also be life changing and devastating and we can't afford to get it wrong. Please when looking at education consider how these young people are being affected not only through social isolation but the anxiety they are experiencing when they think about their future and being unprepared for exams. We need to look now at how we will assess these youngsters. Kind Regards [redacted]

16 June – DFM

Hi, I am looking for some advice please for when my kids go back to school in August. As my [redacted] (aged [redacted]) has [redacted], which is an autoimmune illness, can you put my mind at ease as to how any child with an illness will be properly looked after? I know a lot of a change before the 11th August but are you putting things in place for people in similar situations? Regards [redacted]

16 June – DFM

From: [redacted]

Sent: 16 June 2020 15:31

To: Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills <DFMCSE@gov.scot>

Subject: Plans for schools opening August 2020

Dear Mr. Swinney,

I am writing about the proposed plans for “blended learning” from August for Scottish school children. In March, I fully supported the lockdown and the closures of schools to protect our NHS and our vulnerable. With infection and death rates coming down, I feel we have achieved this as a nation. Now it is our children’s futures that are vulnerable and they need the full force of the national government behind them. Anything short of a full time, 100% opening of schools in August is letting our children down horribly. We are “fortunate” in that as a freelancer I can stop work with my [redacted] now being the only wage earner. We have a stable home life and stable wifi. My [redacted] children ([redacted]) each have access to a device. But that is not enough. They need proper, trained teachers to teach them. They need the ideas that are born out of collaborative work with fellow students. They need friends. And that’s just us. How about children whose lives are not stable, who cannot have a parent full time on them at home? Worse, children who are neglected and abused and school is their only safe place?

Anything less than a full time return to school will be unacceptable for our children. The vast majority of them are not vulnerable to Covid 19. We now know more about how this disease is transmitted than we did in the dark days of March. Whether a third of the children are in school or a half, I can guarantee that the kids will not adhere strictly to social distancing so why not just let all the kids go back? Let go of social distancing in schools. Shut down as necessary if there is a cluster.

Private schools can get their kids back full time in August / September. I shudder at the thought of the attainment gap this part-time schooling (because let’s face it, this is what it is) will result in.

How this generation of school children is treated will be the legacy of this government. Scotland cannot afford a generation of undereducated young adults. You have the power to change this.

Best regards,

[redacted]

16 June – DFM

Dear Mr Swinney I am writing to you concerning the current educational crisis that has resulted from the coronavirus pandemic. As parent of a child due to start [redacted] school I am extremely concerned by the long-term damage that is being inflicted on our children as a result of school closures and the plans for "blended learning" aka home school from August. With two months to continue to monitor both the infection and death rates from coronavirus, to fully implement the track, trace and isolate policy, and to examine evidence from other countries that have reopened schools, I strongly urge you to reconsider. There are massive social issues, plus the physical and mental health of children. They are entitled to an education in school and to associate with friends, and these rights should be removed only where proportionate. I would submit that this is now disproportionate given the levels of community infection and the lack of risk to children. Neither do they appear to be spreaders of the disease. The default position now should be that schools go back full time in August, with no social distancing and keeping good hygiene. I am a [redacted] and it is not right that my [redacted] be shut up with just with me for months on end. We are lucky and [redacted] is safe and looked after, but still very fed up. Online learning and helpline are no substitute for school and I cannot understand why children are being so badly served. Children need you to step up and get the schools open.
Yours sincerely [redacted]

16 June - DFM

From: [redacted]

Sent: 16 June 2020 12:15

To: Swinney J (John), MSP <John.Swinney.msp@parliament.scot>

Subject: Children

Hello,

Firstly I really hope this reaches Mr Swinney or whoever makes decisions regarding schools. I am pleading that decisions are made to get things back to normal. Why is our country stalling on this? My daughter has just been at my house in tears of despair. What is happening is absolutely shocking. Firstly our children need to get back to school immediately, never mind this waiting till August!! Also the school holidays should be cancelled completely to let these children catch up.

I don't understand how you are not getting the fact that home schooling is not working especially for the little ones and to say that they will be going back only two days a week in August is crazy. Closing the school on a Wednesday for cleaning, really ! Clean the school in the evenings!! I am disgusted at the attitude of teachers and teachers unions, it seems to me they make any excuse not to be at school!! My [redacted] started school last August and was coming on leaps and bounds. Now [redacted] can't even write a small sentence, [redacted] has forgotten nearly everything.

Why can't we follow Denmark as we are at a much calmer stage now, why are you stalling all of this situation, I don't understand this. In Denmark children have been back at school full time since April, no major changes made to the school and parents and staff were told if you don't want to send your children to school that is fine and teachers if you do not want to teach that is fine but parents there will be no home online schooling and teachers you will be on reduced pay and guess what everyone is back at school, children and teachers . There has been no problem in Denmark. Also all children are suffering really badly now. There is nothing for them to do, no swimming, no clubs, parks are even restricted and let's face there are only so many times you can go to the park without the children getting fed up with repeating that over and over. This is all so damaging to there mental health. It is cruelty to children that's what it is.

I am begging you as a [redacted] and [redacted] on behalf of all other parents and grandparents do something about this now, not one week, two weeks or three weeks but now!! This is a crisis situation for our children.

Thank you

[redacted]

16 June – DFM

From: [redacted]

Sent: 16 June 2020 13:05

To: Swinney J (John), MSP <John.Swinney.msp@parliament.scot>

Subject: Planned schools return

Dear Mr Swinney

Please find attached.

Regards [redacted]

[redacted]

16 June, 2020

Dear Mr Swinney

I write as a very concerned [redacted] about the planned severe restrictions on children's access to school education. There is a growing sense around government statements, that education is being seen and treated as a social service and not as a human and legal right.

Of course, it goes without saying that teachers should never have to work in conditions that pose a risk to their health and it is this physical circumstance which requires attention, not a timetable which is being reduced to negligible.

I note that it is a stated aim of your Government to reduce socio-economic inequalities in Scotland, in which case, the extremely negative impact, that the planned reductions in face-to-face teaching, is to have on poorer families ought to be the government's primary consideration.

As ever, those children whose parents have the financial means can find an escape route via private schools or private tutors. The rest will be trapped at home, many of them without computer-access to online educational facilities, for almost four out of five 'school' days. Inequalities in educational attainments and social skills will increase immediately and dramatically and for some, there will be no opportunity to catch up. Ever. This says nothing of the awful financial constraints that the family will have to endure, with parents forced out of work.

I write as a very concerned [redacted], about my own [redacted] education, about all the rest of the children in Scotland and as a citizen concerned about the future of the country.

I look forward to hearing from you.

[redacted]

16 June – DFM

-----Original Message-----

From: [redacted]

Sent: 16 June 2020 14:20

To: Sturgeon N (Nicola), MSP <Nicola.Sturgeon.msp@parliament.scot>; Gray I (Iain), MSP <Iain.Gray.msp@parliament.scot>; Swinney J (John), MSP <John.Swinney.msp@parliament.scot>; Halcro Johnston J (Jamie), MSP <Jamie.HalcroJohnston.msp@parliament.scot>; Wishart B (Beatrice), MSP <Beatrice.Wishart.MSP@Parliament.scot>; Leonard R (Richard), MSP <Richard.Leonard.msp@parliament.scot>; Carlaw J (Jackson), MSP <Jackson.Carlaw.msp@parliament.scot>; Greer R (Ross), MSP <Ross.Greer.msp@parliament.scot>

Subject: Getting Children Back to School

Dear Nicola & All

Our children must go back to school full-time in August - it is a challenge, but it can be achieved if there's a genuine will to do it. You must all work together and just for once see if you can't leave party political point scoring out of it.

I have attached a proposal which I request you kindly take a few minutes to read and consider. It's not long so you'll easily be able to read through it before the kettle boils.

Please think of our children who have no useful home support, children who live in impoverished areas, in impoverished and very challenging home environments. Children from these backgrounds are every bit as intelligent as children who are lucky enough to have many resources at their disposal. They should have someone in their corner - please let that be you.

Get our children back to school full-time from August - JUST MAKE IT HAPPEN.

Kind regards

[redacted]

Attachment:

[Proposal on how to get our children back to school](#)

Get our children back to school full-time from August - NO BLENDED LEARNING.

School buildings are not vital for teaching and learning. In order to get all children back to school full-time we should set up Teaching Hubs. Use local facilities such as:

- Community Centres
- Town/Village Halls

- Guide/Scout Halls
- Churches/Church Halls
- Conference facilities e.g. hospitality suites in football stadia

All spaces within schools also need to be utilised including gyms, assembly and dining halls.

We also have NHS Louisa Jordan – a huge space already set up with all required utilities.

Teaching Hubs

Hubs are based in suitable and appropriate local spaces as outstations of the local school. Each hub is managed and led by a teacher who will be based in the local school. Each teacher manager will take responsibility for several hubs.

The Hub leader will:

- Set and monitor lessons
- Use various methods to manage the delivery of lessons
- Make full use of all appropriate IT for live streaming of lessons
- Use IT e.g. Zoom for on-going support to Hub and monitoring of lesson delivery
- Give support to teaching assistants
- Identify and put in place additional support for children where necessary

Vulnerable children, and children with the most learning and support needs, will not attend a Teaching Hub. They will remain in school and receive 100% face-to-face learning with their teacher.

Delivery Support

Retired teachers must be asked to return to work in order to support Hubs. They will either come back to a full teaching role or provide support to Hub delivery activities. This could be hands-on within the Hub or direct support to the Hub teacher manager through, for example, live monitoring of lesson delivery.

Delivery Within Hubs

The lessons in the Hubs will be delivered by teaching assistants/volunteers – managed, monitored and controlled by the Hub teacher manager.

People should be encouraged to volunteer as teaching assistants. There will be no shortage of numbers – consider the number of people who volunteered to help NHS and other community groups at the start of lockdown.

The teaching assistant/volunteer role is easily deliverable:

- Many experienced and skilled people are always willing to support their community through volunteering
- More people will be available due to losing their jobs
- Many of these people will not be looking for full-time employment but will want to do something
- The role is not dissimilar to parents helping children with their homework

Additional safeguarding can be achieved by continuous live monitoring of lesson delivery and where necessary always having two teaching assistants working together.

Delivery Model

Reasons to support this model:

- It will allow all children to return to full-time education in August
- Relatively cheap to deliver
- It is a very simple model
- Additional support needs will be easily identified
- It will enable the Teacher Manager to provide additional teaching support where needed
- Safeguarding protocols will be maintained

We MUST put our children first

All children need to be back at school full-time from August

No blended learning

If we care about our children – MAKE IT HAPPEN

16 June – DFM

From: [redacted]

Sent: 16 June 2020 14:35

To: Swinney J (John), MSP <John.Swinney.msp@parliament.scot>

Subject: Blended learning

Dear Mr Swinney,

I am writing with regard to the proposed plans for blended learning in schools from August 2020. By way of background, I have a [redacted] about to start school this year and a [redacted] both of whom were in nursery until lockdown began. I worked as a [redacted] in [redacted] but handed in my notice in order to care for my children. Both sets of parents in our family are [redacted].

Whilst I understand the aim of government currently is to keep the rate of infection down and thus stop the NHS being overwhelmed, I believe that the children of this country have made enough sacrifices. They should be allowed to return to school as normal, and without social distancing rules, whilst those still at risk in society are protected. I have set out my reasoning below.

1. **Children have a very low risk of contracting covid-19.** In fact, it has already been stated that children have more chance of being struck by lightning than dying from covid-19. While I understand that teachers are obviously concerned about their safety too, countries like The Netherlands have already proven that teachers can still maintain some social distance from students. This is with everyone in full time. By all accounts, key workers across the nation have been dealing with this type of risk for some time already.
2. **Social distancing for children is psychologically harmful.** Neuroscientists are saying that “obsessive compulsive behaviour risks becoming more common in children because of the hygiene and lockdown measures introduced.” Keeping children apart from each other physically is clearly detrimental to their mental wellbeing, instilling early anxieties in them around human interaction. While it is easy for the government to report statistics infection rates, it is not so easy to report statistics of psychological damage. What we do know however, is that child suicide rates had already risen by 160% in Scotland before this lockdown even began. Why is mental health still coming second to covid-19? The damage that social distancing could potentially do to the young surpasses anything the infection is even vaguely capable of.

Vulnerable children are also at grave risk out of the system, both mentally and physically—33% of time back is not enough as school often provides them with the only “normal” and safe time they have.

3. **Social distancing for children is physically harmful.** 33% in school means there’s still 77% of time at home, where they are potentially inactive. Lockdown has not been an equal playing field for all families in terms of health, and there have been reports of children not even getting out of bed or leaving the house. In addition, children’s

general immunity has been impaired during this time of isolation, making them far more susceptible to other illnesses.

4. **Children are starting to mix with vulnerable groups because of lockdown.** I have recently observed that, in lieu of full-time childcare, parents of young children are beginning to rely on grandparents again—one group of society we are apparently trying to protect. Why is this happening? The answer is simple: the working (and non-working) parents of this country cannot sustain this situation. The mental distress to parents of combining work and childcare without relief is impossible to measure right now, but the effects are real. 33% days in school for kids from August will not adequately resolve anything—most jobs are over 33% of the week, and so the reliance on vulnerable family members will only increase as parents continue to crack under pressure.
5. **Children are already mixing in close contact with their peers.** In the past few weeks, it has become increasingly obvious in parks that children are naturally gravitating to each other once again. Setting up creative ways of separating children two months down the line in August seems like a monumental waste of both money and time, which could be better spent on improving health care services.
6. **Further lockdown only pushes the severe cases into the future—it will not prevent them.** There is evidence to suggest that everyone will be exposed to covid-19 and most people will be infected at some stage whatever we do with schools. What is encouraging is that many people will have mild symptoms or none at all, and some of us could already be immune. In terms of the severe cases, the government's focus now should be on ensuring there is optimal care in place.
7. **Learning from other countries.** France has already tried out part-time learning, but what they have found is it still affects the most vulnerable in society the worst. It is a social emergency. This is why from Monday, the French schools are all going back on a full-time, compulsory basis. Why are we not doing in August—two months away—what France, and other countries, have already figured out in June?

In conclusion, I believe children in Scotland should be allowed to carry on with as much normality as possible; no social distancing in schools and a full-time return in August. Children are fundamentally not at risk and other countries such as The Netherlands and France have already proven a full time return to schools is now possible.

In light of all of the above, I would urge the government to reconsider its plan to introduce blended learning in August and reinstate full-time education.

Yours sincerely,

[redacted]

[redacted]

16 June – DFM

From: [redacted]

Sent: 16 June 2020 11:51

To: Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills <DFMCSE@gov.scot>

Subject: [redacted]

Hi John

I am sending this as backup as I'm not entirely sure the form I submitted at <https://m.johnswinney.scot/contact-us/> worked at all!

My concern partly falls under your remit as my constituency MSP, partly your ministerial brief.

[redacted] have advised parents that due to space they will only be able to accommodate a third of their pupils on site at any time [from August 11th](#). So having been "offered" a say in whether we would prefer 1 week on/1 week off or 2 days on/3 days off, we parents have now been told it will be neither. Instead it will be 3 days on 6 days off over 9 school days. Not even over 10 days, which would have offered a modicum of routine. They won't be in school the same days in any given fortnight. Thankfully we only have one child in school, I can't imagine how anyone with children in different year groups or split across primary and secondary is supposed to cope.

At yesterday's briefing Nicola made it clear in the Q&A that one week in three in school wouldn't be acceptable. So I expect this 1/3 will be raised with [redacted]

So, to my point. Given that our young people are going to have so little face to face contact time I think it's essential that the subjects they plan to sit exams in next May are given the absolute priority. I don't want my [redacted] precious teacher contact time wasted on core PE or core RE. I have already raised this with the SMT at [redacted] who have yet to respond. Since they are legally obliged to deliver both these subjects, I am unsure how they will respond.

Facing only 16.5 hours contact over a period when pupils would normally get 49.5, 2 hours of core PE and an hour of core RE would eat up almost 20% of their time in school.

Will you consider temporarily suspending schools' legal obligation regarding core PE and RE? Or perhaps consider issuing guidance that they be "taught" during the out of school periods of blended learning?

Regards
[redacted]

17 June – DFM

From: [redacted]

Sent: 17 June 2020 15:30

To: Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills
<DFMCSE@gov.scot>

Subject: Re: Return to School

Dear John

I have once again been contacted by a constituent raising the issue of the return to schools.

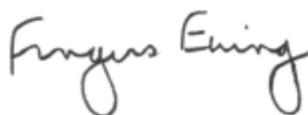
My constituent [redacted] has asked me to relay [redacted] comments on this matter. [redacted] asks that consideration be given on geographical easing be considered regarding schools going back. [redacted] goes on to state that:

“I have relatives/friends in southern England who have seen their children return to pre-school (3 days a week from 1 June) and secondary school (1 day each week from tomorrow). In the pre-school case, the parents cannot praise highly enough the work done by teachers/teaching assistants to ensure that the situation is as safe as humanly possible without scaring/upsetting the kids too much. The benefits in terms of social interaction, development and reducing isolation to all children allowed to return to school even for a very limited time initially are huge and I fear are being largely dismissed in Scotland”.

[redacted] is concerned, that in [redacted] opinion, in the absence of any real information on why the science in Scotland seems to look very different than elsewhere, [redacted] is struggling to see the justification for keeping schools in Scotland closed until 11th August where as other countries in Europe provide many lessons on how to manage the safe re-opening of schools.

I would be very grateful to receive your comments on the issues raised by my constituent in this matter.

Kind regards,



Fergus Ewing MSP

Member of Scottish Parliament for Inverness and Nairn

Scottish Government Cabinet Secretary for Rural Economy

Office of Fergus Ewing MSP, 112 Church Street, Inverness, IV1 1EP

17 June 2020 - DFM

Dear Mr Swinney

Flexible Educational Arrangements: [redacted]

I am writing to you regarding new research published today by the Poverty Alliance on the use of Flexible Educational Arrangements for young people in [redacted]. Funded by the Corra Foundation, this research was conducted to explore the experiences of young people, their families, and education and third sector practitioners of Flexible Educational Arrangements (also known as Approved Flexible Packages, flexible timetables, and part-time timetables in Scotland). The impetus for this research was part of a wider project on systems change in Fife where practitioners felt that changes should be made to the delivery of Flexible Educational Arrangements.

Whilst a small-scale study specifically focused on the experiences of young people receiving additional levels of support, we feel this research has particular relevance given the impact of the Coronavirus on education provision in Scotland and provides timely learning on the experiences of young people disrupted from full-time education and impacts on families. The key findings included evidence that:

- Young people on part-time timetables struggle to keep up with their school work.
- Families struggle with the financial impacts as well as managing caring responsibilities whilst their child(ren) are at home.

The report makes several recommendations specifically for [redacted] who we have been engaging with in this work. Of particular relevance, is the need for parents and young people to be provided with clear information about what their part-time timetable will involve.

We believe that this research will provide useful learning as education provision is delivered on part-time basis when schools return in August, particularly in respect to families living on low incomes. We also think it is important to highlight this particular area of practice in the Scottish education system, as there is very little information available on the prevalence of Flexible Educational Arrangements across Scotland.

My colleagues [redacted] and [redacted] would be happy to discuss the research in further detail. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Yours Sincerely,
[redacted]

17 June 2020 - DFM

From: [redacted]

Sent: 17 June 2020 14:56

To: Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills <DFMCSE@gov.scot>

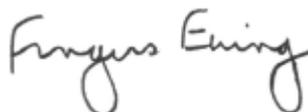
Subject: FW: [redacted] Schools

Dear John

As per the enquiry below, I have received further enquiries on the same issue regarding the return of schools.

I have attached two emails- from [redacted] - both raising the same issue and as I can appreciate that you are inundated with similar enquires on this matter, I would be grateful if you could also take into consideration the points that they have also raised.

Kind regards,



Fergus Ewing MSP

Member of Scottish Parliament for Inverness and Nairn

Scottish Government Cabinet Secretary for Rural Economy

Office of Fergus Ewing MSP, 112 Church Street, Inverness, IV1 1EP

Telephone: 01463 713 004

Attachments:

EMAIL 1

Good morning Fergus,

I am a [redacted] and [redacted] living in [redacted]. I am most anxious about the prospects of limited schooling when term resumes in August. While accepting the importance of staying on top of covid 19, I am extremely concerned about the impact of closed and potentially restricted schools on children and their parents. This has significant implications for the educational and emotional development of the children and the economic and mental resilience of parents and carers. I believe that with proper hygienic measures in place we should be returning to virtually normal teaching conditions in August, assuming of course that levels of Covid continue to decrease. This might need to be considered on a regional basis.

I am of the opinion that generally speaking the Scottish government has handled the situation well and Nicola Sturgeon has shown strong leadership with her daily announcements.

Kind regards,

[redacted]

EMAIL 2

Dear Mr Ewing

[redacted] devolved administration can really get on the front foot over educating the next generation. We managed huge efforts for health, now is the time for education. We owe our kids the best of creative thinking, ambition and drive over the coming weeks. A day a week in August would be a massive dis-service to them. Can Scotland grip this and get ahead of the shambles in England? Please plan boldly for the world we expect in August, not the 2metre world of today. I'm confident schools will respond positively and creatively if given the instruction from central government and LAs to open schools properly.

Thank you and sincerely,

[redacted]

17 June 2020 – DFM

John

You are busy man so I will keep this brief.

I have been watching the Covid 19 announcements, debates etc and have a suggestion with regards to Schools returning.

The main problem appears to be space and wanting as many kids back at the same time. I saw you were appealing to Councils to look at Halls, Libraries, etc. to be utilised. My thinking is Councils/Govt could **hire PortaKabins** and place them within the school grounds - I assume the playgrounds will not be used due to virus.

PoraKabins are used on construction sites and have electrical power / heating and can be plumbed in for toilet(s). The class can then be split between the actual classroom and PortaKabin (or 2 portakabins depending on size of class). The PortaKabin can be fitted with a large screen with the teacher based in the actual classroom and the lesson being transmitted to the screens in the PortaKabin(s). It would require a responsible adult to be hired to be present in the PortaKabin(s) while lessons are taking place. This would be for supervision only as the teaching would be by the teacher.

The advantages are:

- 1) Creates more temporary space
- 2) Children are going to their own school and not to various locations in the town/city
- 3) Children are getting their normal Teacher (and vis versa)
- 4) Numbers of pupils entering/exiting can be more easily controlled - letting them out from classrooms and various PortaKabins in stages.
- 5) If school play ground not big enough they can be stacked - but stairs would need to be safe for children.
- 6) Gets some sort of routine back for the pupils

Disadvantage is Cost:

- 1) Hire and Fit-Out of PortaKabins (but it is not as expensive as you may think - ESP with discount for numbers involved).
- 2) Hire of responsible adult
- 3) Cost of additional areas to clean

I base this on the assumption of 7 classes in a **primary school** say 2 per class would be 14 PortaKabins. If you investigate this further enquire about **Large PortaKabins**

Secondary schools however are a different category due to the number of classes involved. But same idea could be adapted for pupils going for **exams in the next session.**

As I say you are a busy man so wont go on any further but you probably get the basis on my suggestion - enough to pursue further if you think it is merited.

Kind Regards

[redacted]

PS wish to remain anon.

17 June 2020 – DFM

Good Afternoon to you both,

I hope this email finds you both well?

We live in [redacted] and I have just received the proposal for my [redacted] children's [redacted] school for returning in August. I fully understand and appreciate the enormity of the coronavirus situation but I cannot comprehend that my kids will only be in school for 3 days every 2 weeks, and even then for the first 2 weeks they will only attend for 1 day over a 2 week period.

I am extremely worried at the adverse effect that this will have on mine and other children's learning. It is already a struggle and challenging to keep the children engaged in home learning.

I was wondering as it is still 8 weeks until the children will be returning to school if either, the social distancing rules will be relaxed to 1 metre to allow more children in the school which would then allow for more days actually in school or if Scotland continues in the right direction with the crisis that you will announce at least possible amendments to the return to school if the virus is under control?

Obviously I understand, and I am of the same opinion that the health of my children and all the teachers and school staff is paramount but I hope you agree and understand that it will be virtually impossible to teach in that timescale and as both myself and my [redacted] work full time, who will look after the children when they are not at school and home learn them?

I appreciate you taking the time to read my email and I look forward to hearing your reply.

Kindest regards

[redacted]