Dear David Evans,

Thank you for your email of 15th April in relation to the re-opening of schools.

I really appreciate the worries that have been expressed by teachers and parents at what is an unprecedented difficult time for everybody. Schools have a vital role to play in supporting the vulnerable, those most at need and the children of front line workers; however, we understand that the unprecedented challenges we are all facing in relation to Covid-19 will cause some anxiety. We are all having to work as best we can as things develop; we are aware of, and are seeking to resolve as quickly as possible the many practical difficulties across education, which have arisen due to COVID 19.

As you know, the expectation is that during the next few weeks there will be practical, local-level ways of working established to deal with the immediate challenges, consistent with the guidance we have published. Keeping staff and children safe is our number one priority, as you are aware we are working closely with local authorities and unions including the NEU to see what measures can be taken to improve conditions to maximise the safety of all those involved in looking after the number of children who cannot stay at home. We are looking at putting in place longer term, resilient arrangements, as we focus on ensuring the best possible outcomes for children and young people in Wales. We do this whilst maintaining our first and absolute priority of safeguarding our communities and protecting against loss of life as a result of Covid-19.

I am sure you are aware that in my press conference that took place on the 15th April I confirmed that Schools in Wales will not re-open for statutory provision next week, and a change to that is not imminent. As I have previously made clear we will be guided by the science and Public Health Wales and will not re open schools until we are told that it is safe to do so.
I also announced that during the last few weeks my officials have been working hard with local authorities, school improvement services, universities and other partners to provide high quality resources and have developed a continuation of learning programme for schools and learners. Therefore, to coincide with the beginning of the summer term next week we will launch our Stay Safe, Stay Learning programme. While I want to keep our children safe, I also want them to keep learning so that they can catch up as quickly as possible when schools re-open.

Yours sincerely,

Kirsty Williams AC/AM
Y Gweinidog Addysg
Minister for Education