

Date 11 December 2020

Your ref

Our ref IP/JR

Dear Alison,

School Christmas Holidays 2020

I'm writing in response to the request to move to remote learning on the final days of this term (21st and 22nd) before Christmas.

I wanted to firstly thank every member of staff across our schools, who have worked tirelessly in these times for the sake of our pupils. For this, we will forever be grateful. I wanted also to say that I understand the concerns you have raised.

However, yesterday representatives from all political parties on the Council met to fully discuss all the views expressed, both in favour and against. It was agreed that we would abide by the advice of the Scottish Government's health advisers.

The Public Health advice states that schools should stay open as the controlled school environment is preferable to social mixing outside of school if schools are closed early. Being in school, according to the Chief Social Work Advisor in Scotland, is a very significant protective factor for children.

We were also concerned that a change to school holidays at this late stage and at such short notice, would create significant difficulties and disruption for working families and single parents and carers to their childcare arrangements. There were also wider concerns to be considered, such as vulnerable children.

The short notice also made it impossible to consult widely with parents, who may be completely unaware of this potential late change. This would be our normal practice.

There is, no doubt the relatively low infection rates in our schools in Edinburgh is testament to the tremendous work all our staff in schools have been undertaking since August. I can confirm that arrangements are being put in place to ensure staff in schools will not be involved in any administration of Track and Trace activity during the break and therefore will be able to look forward to a well-deserved Christmas holiday when schools close as planned on Tuesday 22nd December.

We hugely understand that all our staff in schools will be disappointed when there was so much publicity around the proposal. However, given the short time the Council has had to discuss the proposals and the lack of proper consultation that would offer insight into the health, parental and wider implications of a change in arrangements, we felt it was, on balance, the right decision to follow the scientific advice of the Health Professionals

Yours sincerely



Ian Perry

Convener, Education Children and Families Committee