



NASUWT



21st May 2020

Cllr. Paul Brading,
Isle of Wight Council

Dear Cllr. Brading,

A wider return to school when it is safe

We find ourselves in total agreement with your recent statement on the wider return of schools: “If it’s not right and we’re not ready, it won’t be done.” We believe 1st June is not right.

The current proposals to substantially expand Primary School openings from 1st June, presents an unacceptable risk to children, staff and the wider Isle of Wight community. We believe that 1st June is neither the ‘right’ time nor do we believe that schools are ‘ready’ to return from this date.

It seems extremely unlikely at present that circumstances nationally and locally will allow any school to fully comply with the advice and guidance which Unions have issued to our members and we have shared with the Isle of Wight Council.

Many Councils across the country have said that it is too soon for a wider return to school and they have stated that schools in their Local Authority will not be open from 1st June. We are, therefore, calling on the Isle of Wight Council to make a similar commitment – put the safety of children, and the people who work with them, before any arbitrary opening date.

So far, the information we have received from the Isle of Wight Council has not convinced our members that returning to school is safe. For example, there has been no Local Authority confirmation that the ‘test, track and trace’ procedures will be in place in schools from 1st June. Even the Government seem uncertain about when this will be available. There is no procedure in place for the use of the NHS app in school and we are not aware of whether schools will close if there is a case of Covid-19 (Cowes Enterprise College closed for a week when they had a confirmed case).

Furthermore, given that the science does not yet show that children do not transmit the virus, we believe that schools should operate in the same way as other workplaces and maintain social distancing of a minimum of 2 metres in classrooms and when moving around school. It is alarming to learn, therefore, that some schools have said that such social distancing cannot be guaranteed.

Our members want to return to school, but only when it is safe. We are pleased to hear the concern that so many politicians are expressing for disadvantaged children. These concerns are vital to our members and our Unions too. However, given that it seems likely that many children may not be able to return to school for some time, we are also keen to discuss how we can support those children now, and in the future, as schooling eventually resumes.

Yours sincerely,

Dominic Coughlin
Branch Secretary
Isle of Wight NEU

Dawn Garey
Branch Secretary
Isle of Wight NASUWT

Mark Chiverton
Branch Secretary
Isle of Wight UNISON

Liam Cumming
Branch Secretary
Isle of Wight GMB