

Dear Jon and the Trustees of United Learning,

Firstly, we would like to thank you for the praise you have given us. In a time when certain elements of the national media are becoming increasingly hostile, such support is more than welcome.

You have expressed your concern over the widening gulf between the wealthy and poor, in terms of their progress whilst schools are open only to a small minority of pupils. Unequivocally, we share your concern, but there are question marks over whether their proposed return would help to close this gap. If the only safe option is for the students to be in 'bubbles' where their interaction is limited, they may be even less able to interact with subject specialists than they are when taking part in distance learning. Equally, there is the possibility that we would be creating greater risk for these families by exposing their children to a wider range of people. As much as we would like to believe that our Y6 pupils and teenagers would understand the importance of social distancing, a glance around the streets in the time since the Prime Minister lessened the lockdown measure would suggest otherwise. The Chartered College of Teaching, which UL recommends teachers subscribe to has also written to the Prime Minister (20 May 2020) expressing their concern at the lack of transparency from the Government regarding the high risk of going back too soon. They have also questioned how the current guidance will help prevent the 'disadvantage gap' from widening further.

You have stated that you are even more keen than the government for pupils to return to the classroom. We share your enthusiasm, but only once the five tests recommended by the NEU, based on scientific and medical evidence, have been met. You have indicated that you are not worried about the safety of your own children; this is not a widely shared feeling amongst our colleagues. It is important that parents who rely on an important figurehead in education such as yourself to provide them with reassurance, are being given such reassurance based on empirical evidence, rather than instinct. Whilst there is no evidence to suggest that children transmit the COVID 19 virus any more so than adults, there is also no evidence to suggest that they transmit the virus any less so.

Scientists along with the BMA have expressed their deep concerns about the further reopening of schools on 1 June. A committee of independent scientists chaired by Sir David King, the former Chief Scientific Advisor, has released a 'draft consultation report' which says that schools should not re-open until local 'test, track, and isolate' systems are in place. 'There is no clear evidence that these conditions are met. Until they are it is not safe to open schools on June 1,' the report says. (<http://www.independentsage.org/too-early-to-re-open-schools-on-june-1-says-independent-sage/>)

The government has indicated that they are looking at other European models when deciding upon the next step. For example, a study from the University of East Anglia that says: "School closures in Europe had the greatest association with a subsequent reduction in the spread of the disease." And empirical evidence has emerged from Denmark suggesting an increase in community transmission following opening of schools. This week, France closed some schools after a third of children were allowed back to class, due to 70 new COVID-19 cases coming to light. We are sure that you would not want to put the families who look to you for guidance in any jeopardy, so perhaps this model is one that needs to be considered.

It is with this in mind that we ask you and the trustees to reconsider your decision to open our school gates to more children and staff on 1 June. Until we can ensure the safety of all our staff and students, we think it best to wait. We believe that our energies should be focused on ensuring that the current provision we provide to keyworker and vulnerable children, along with our students studying at home, is the very best that we can provide and that our schools communities deserve.

From,

NEU School Representatives, including:

I&S	Whittingham Primary Academy
	The John Roan School
	The Joan Roan School
I&S	The Totteridge Academy
I&S	Southway Primary School
I&S	Southway Primary School
I&S	Sheffield Park Primary School
	Sheffield Park Primary
I&S	Swindon Academy
I&S	Richard Rose Morton Academy
	Midhurst Rother College
I&S	Midhurst Rother College
I&S	William Hulme Grammar School
I&S	William Hulme Grammar School
I&S	William Hulme Grammar School
I&S	Walthamstow Academy
I&S	Bacon's College
	Bacon's College
I&S	Abbey Hey Primary Academy
I&S	Lambeth Academy
I&S	Avonbourne College
I&S	Irlam and Cadishead Academy
I&S	Newstead Wood School
I&S	, AKS Lytham
I&S	Hunningley Primary School
I&S	, West Smeaton Academy
	Manchester Academy
	, Manchester Academy
	Winston Way Primary School
I&S	High Hazels Academy
I&S	High Hazels Academy
I&S	High Hazels Academy
	, Northampton Academy
	Albion Academy

