

Monday 11<sup>th</sup> May 2020

Dear Parents, Carers and Guardians, Children and Young People,

I wanted to write to you today following the Prime Minister's announcement last night, to give you some clarity around what we are doing to ensure that we can open our schools in line with the guidance.

The Prime Minister's words were heavily conditional: "***If*** we as a nation ***begin*** to fulfil the conditions I have set out, then in the next few weeks and months, we ***may*** be able to go further. In step two ***at the earliest by June 1<sup>st</sup>*** after half term, we believe we ***may*** be in a position to get primary pupils back into schools, in stages, beginning with reception, year 1 and year 6."

The Prime Minister was clear in his expectations that before any of the suggested approaches to reopen our schools could take place there would need to be visible and consistent scientific evidence that the **5 tests** were demonstrating positive impact. He was also clear that these conditions have not yet been satisfied and so until such a time as we are advised that this has changed we will continue to work in our current way because nothing, yet, has changed in respect of the opening of schools.

We are all focused on ensuring that the schools can be opened as soon as possible and our key priority in this is to ensure the safety of everyone in our school community.

We have been advised that further guidance will be issued this week and so we will be working throughout the week ahead of us to create a clear plan for how, and when we would be able to open our schools to key identified groups of pupils; and the criteria that we will need to be satisfied to ensure that any groups coming into school, and those that will be working with them are safe. We will share our initial plans with you as soon as we have finalised them, and we hope that this will give you all some clarity about how our schools will plan, and begin to open over the forthcoming months.

What we do know at the moment is this:

- There is currently no change to the ways that schools are expected to work, and we will be advised of when any restrictions are going to be lifted
- Any opening of the schools will be on a phased basis, and for only key groups of pupils
- 1<sup>st</sup> June is the earliest possible date proposed for open; but schools will also need time to plan for how education in school, and home-learning for those not attending school, will work.
- Some schools may find it difficult to open in the ways suggested by the Government due to the current restrictions on staff who are shielding, or advised to work from home due to medical conditions or other circumstances. All staff are advised to follow the Government and their own Medical Practitioner's guidance on their own return to school before returning to school to ensure that they are safeguarded
- Social distancing remains a requirement in school and so our plans for having pupils return will have to reflect these restrictions, which will have implications for how many pupils can return at any one time. Some of our schools may find this particularly difficult because of the nature of their buildings and site, and we may have to make some decisions on opening related to this also

- Any changes that we make now could be very quickly reversed should the rate of infection rise nationally, and so we need to ensure that our planning also takes into account the partial opening, and the closure of schools as part of our emergency procedures.

There is still a lot to do before we can clarify how this will work for the schools and for yourselves, and so I am writing today to reassure you that we are planning how this will work now, and that we will let you all know how this will affect you, your families and the schools over the forthcoming week.

We apologise that we can't immediately give you an indication of how this will work, when the schools will open, and to answer your questions. We will do this as soon as we have the clear guidance we have requested, and have a clear plan across the Trust.

At the moment we are giving the same message to everyone in our school family – whilst it feels harder given the Prime Minister's message last night, **in the short-term there are no changes to the ways that we are currently working in our schools. We will plan for how we could work with any groups of pupils in school, and will put in place the structures that will enable us to move quickly to bring groups of pupils into school when we are advised that it is safe to do so.**

I will be in touch later this week to give you an update, and to outline our approach to the partial re-opening of our schools. Until then I hope that you have a good week and that you continue to stay safe and well.

With kind regards,

*Jez Piper*

CEO