



Wednesday 24th June 2020

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

I haven't written to you for a couple of weeks as we've been busy working with all our schools to see how the current plans are working in practice; and we've been reviewing our options for changing our current 'offer' to parents and families in light of what we have learned so far. And we have learned a great deal! I wanted to write to you all now to begin to set out what we have learned, to confirm how the rest of the summer term will work in our schools; and, to share some of our thinking about ways that we can begin to return in September.

You will be aware that the Prime Minister spoke openly last week about his intention to ensure that all pupils return to school in September, and again yesterday about the easing of the 2 metre social distancing measures where appropriate. We have been advised that there will be a Ministerial statement later this week which may set out the Government's plans for schools returning in September. At the moment the guidance for schools remains largely unchanged and as you will be aware from the media the questions around a fluctuating R-number means that we must continue to be extremely careful to ensure that our plans remain realistic, appropriate and feasible.

We have undertaken in-depth risk assessment and analysis in all of our schools over the last few weeks looking at capacity, staffing arrangements, physical space, access to handwashing facilities, toilets... every aspect of need required for us all to be in school in the ways that we are being asked to work. There are some significant areas that we have demonstrated that I would like to share openly with you.

- If the social distancing measures in schools, and the current guidance remain as they are now the capacity of our schools will be no more than we are currently offering. Each school has assessed their capacity, this has been verified by the Trust, and they are unable to offer many more spaces than they are already doing without increasing the risk to those in school, and to families.
- Following Government guidance of ensuring capacity for vulnerable pupils, and the children of keyworkers has significantly increased the numbers of pupils now attending school and all schools are reaching towards capacity with this cohort alone. Where there is some capacity available schools are doing what they can to safely provide spaces in school for pupils in Nursery, Reception, Year 1, or Year 6 and this is dependent on the context of the school. Once the schools reach the risk assessed capacity, they will not be able to take any more pupils.
- If social distancing measures are reduced to less than 2 metres for schools specifically, but remain in place, our calculations are that we will still not be able to accommodate all pupils in one class in most circumstances. We will only, realistically, be able to bring all pupils from a class back at the same time when all restrictions are removed or significantly reduced in relation to classrooms and schools.
- The updated guidance for schools has made it clear that we are not allowed to use village halls or public facilities to extend learning from a school into another local space unless it is owned by the school. Whilst we have explored these options fully, we are unable to do this in our schools.

We completely, and personally, understand and appreciate the frustration that many of you feel as aspects of the lock-down are eased, but school are still not able to offer additional places. I have, sadly, been made aware of some criticism of some of our leaders and Local Boards on social media because of the decisions reached about which groups of pupils can return to school. Please accept my assurance that our schools are all going above and beyond the call of duty to bring as many children and young people back to school, and in any way they can, safely. I have been touched by the messages that I have received of support for our actions and communication during this crisis, and I am extremely grateful for the support that has been given to our schools as they struggle to do their very best in these ever-changing circumstances.



These are unprecedented times and whilst there are undoubtedly frustrations from us all that we are unable to bring all of the children and young people back to school, we are committed to doing what we can to work with you all to find the safety and best ways to start to rebuild.

To ensure that we can do this I am going to set out some changes that will apply to all of our schools between now and September:

- The official end of term for all schools in the Trust will be **Friday 17th July**.
- All schools will be given flexibility to reduce the groups of pupils currently attending from **Friday 10th July, if appropriate and required**. This may mean ending school-based lessons for some pupils on 10th July.
- Year 7 will have some 'keep in touch' meetings in school before the end of the term.
- The week **13th – 17th July** will be set aside to enable schools to make arrangements to have contact with pupils who have not yet returned to school. This will enable staff to 'see' pupils, to start the work of preparation for September and to enable pupils to 'finish the year'. Each school has been given the flexibility to do this in the most appropriate and safest ways, and they will advise you directly of their plans.
- None of our schools will be open over the Summer period (17th July – 1st September). Where possible we will signpost parents to childcare provision for over the summer.

I will write again following the guidance we receive later this week with the intention of giving some more clarity of what our return in September will start to look like. At the moment we understand that whilst it is the intention of the Government to bring all pupils back to school, this may still be tempered by the restrictions on schools – with guidance not being finalised until during the summer break. And so, we want to give all families some sort of surety before we break up of what the first few weeks of term will look like.

If the restrictions for schools are fully lifted, at this stage, our key plan is for a full return of all pupils from the week beginning **7th September**. This will enable us to do some phased transition on 3rd and 4th September for children and young people in transition years such as Reception, Year 3, Year 6, and Year 7. If the restrictions are not sufficiently lifted, we will need to begin to operate in a fundamentally different way which will need to look like a mixture of face-to-face learning and home-learning for all year groups, if the guidance permits us to work in this way. As soon as we have clarity on this we will let you know, but at this stage I want you all to be aware of the possible scenarios, including the possibility of Government guidance that we have to remain with the same provision as we currently have.

My apologies that I am unable to give you a more definite answer as to what September will look like, but I hope that further clarity on the end of term will help you all with your own planning.

My continued thanks for your ongoing support, and for all that you are doing for your own children to keep them safe, secure, and well in these complicated times. I will continue to keep you updated as to our plans and approaches.

Stay safe, keep well, and take good care of yourselves.

With kind regards,

Jez Piper

CEO