



Friday 26<sup>th</sup> February 2021

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

Following the Prime Minister's announcement on Monday, and further to the Education Minister's speech yesterday I wanted to write to set out the next steps for our preparation for the return of all of the children and young people to our schools **from** Monday 8<sup>th</sup> March.

This is a moment that we have all wanted and waited for over a long period of time: to have the children and young people back, learning in our schools is at the heart of our focus. We have been advised by the Government that the roadmap out of lockdown is one that is not reversible, and the key milestones every 5 weeks are significant for us all, as they also start to set out how we begin to open our schools more fully to a wider range of learning opportunities and activities over the forthcoming months.

We have to remember that, whilst the schools will begin to return, lockdown measures will still remain in place and so we will be taking an appropriately cautious approach to a return to a more full way of working in each of our schools.

Each of our schools will be taking an approach to the return of all pupils from Monday 8<sup>th</sup> March that is appropriate for them, their communities and for the staff in the school. You will be provided with key information by your child(ren)'s school about their expectations for how each day will work.

The guidance for bring all of the children and young people back into school is very clear, and the Department for Education have provided an update guide for parents, which can be found [here](#). We have initially been asked to focus on some key criteria:

- **All Primary children return on Monday 8<sup>th</sup> March.** Much as we did in September, each school will need to ensure that the start and end of the day is staggered to ensure that staff, parents and children are enabled to have a socially-distanced passage to and from school.
- **All Secondary students return from Monday 8<sup>th</sup> March.** There will be a phased start to the week for students at the Deanery to ensure that Covid testing can effectively take place.
- **Attendance.** The flexibility that we were previously allowed around attendance ends on Friday 5<sup>th</sup> March. From Monday 8<sup>th</sup> March, attendance is mandatory for all pupils. We do, however, understand that there may be some family circumstances that make this more complicated, and so we ask that you contact your child's school as soon as possible next week to discuss this with them Thank you.
- **Wrap-around Care (WAC) provision can restart subject to the restrictions set out in the guidance.** WAC should, where appropriate, return from Monday 8<sup>th</sup> March, unless there are reasons related to staffing or access to space and provision. Schools will ensure that parents are aware of when the WAC can be accessed, and when it will be available.
- **After-school Clubs and activities.** Our key focus is to get everyone back into school, and so schools will ensure that you are aware when they are in a position to begin to run after-school provision. Extra-curricular clubs will not start until after the Easter break, at the earliest.

Over the forthcoming weeks we will provide you with further information about how we are working to further open up our schools and the opportunities for learning, and for families contact with schools. We won't be 'back to normal' for quite a while yet, but Monday 8<sup>th</sup> March marks a very clear starting point for us. We ask your continued help and support as we start this process of

bringing everyone back into school, and as we follow the guidance of the Government's roadmap out of the lockdown.

It is clear for us all is that our focus must be on bringing our children and young people back into school; and there is rightly a lot of talk in the media about the impact on children and young people in returning to school. What we do know is that our children and young people are resilient and, with your support and help, have continued to grow and develop in collaboration with the schools – whether they have been learning from home, or have been in school. Talk of 'catching-up' and 'closing the gap' at this stage is, however, not our immediate key focus. Just as we did with our recovery curriculum we need to ensure that our children and young people come back to a rich and varied curriculum where they can interact with their peers, and enjoy the diverse learning opportunities available in their schools. This will help us to support their learning, help to identify their individual needs, and will provide support for their mental well-being.

Thank you for your continued support for the schools, and for all that you have done and are doing. We look forward to starting to see you as we begin our journey of a full return to school this year.

As ever, my thoughts, prayers and thanks are with you all.

With kind regards,

*Jez Piper*

**CEO**

**Diocese of Bristol Academies Trust**