

6th July 2020

Dear Parents and Carers

Since writing to you in June, the government has issued new advice: schools will open to all pupils on a full time basis in September.

The Government's basis for this is that, as things stand, 'the amount of Coronavirus has decreased, the NHS track and trace system is up and running and we are clear about the measures that need to be in place to create safer environments in schools. Given the improved position, the balance of risk is now overwhelmingly in favour of children returning to school.

Returning to school is vital for children's education and for their wellbeing, particularly for disadvantaged and vulnerable children. The risk to children themselves of becoming severely ill from coronavirus (COVID-19) is very low and there are negative health impacts of being out of school. We know that school is a vital point of contact for public health and safeguarding services that are critical to the wellbeing of children and families.

Lower academic achievement also translates into long-term economic costs due to having a less well-qualified workforce. This affects the standard of living that today's pupils will have over the course of their entire life. For many households, school closures have also affected their ability to work. As the economy begins to recover, we need to remove this barrier so parents and carers can return to work.'

If you would like to review the government's Guidance for parents you will find it here: [What parents and carers need to know about early years providers, schools and colleges in the autumn term](#)

As we plan for the full return to school in September, we will balance and minimise the risks from coronavirus (COVID-19) with providing a full educational experience for children and young people. This will not be perfect. School will not be exactly like it was before Covid 19. However, we will do our best to offer as much as possible to the children within the parameters of keeping people safe and providing a good education. We may not be able to offer everything at once, such as assemblies, clubs etc, but over time and as it is safe to do so, we hope to reintroduce more elements of our usual provision.

We will continue to use a system of controls to reduce the risk of transmission:

- 1) minimise contact with individuals who are unwell by ensuring that those who have coronavirus (COVID-19) symptoms, or who have someone in their household who does, do not attend school
- 2) clean hands thoroughly more often than usual
- 3) ensure good respiratory hygiene by promoting the 'catch it, bin it, kill it' approach
- 4) introduce enhanced cleaning, including cleaning frequently touched surfaces often, using standard products such as detergents and bleach
- 5) minimise contact between individuals and maintain social distancing wherever possible
- 6) where necessary, wear appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE)
- 7) engage with the NHS Test and Trace process
- 8) manage confirmed cases of coronavirus (COVID-19) amongst the school community
- 9) contain any outbreak by following local health protection team advice

As we bring everyone back, we will still use 'bubble groups' as we have been doing previously but these will be larger than before; in secondary it is likely that this will be the whole year group. We will also try to minimise the number of staff working across bubbles but where we need to do this, we will put additional measures in place. The principle is to keep children in self contained groups wherever possible so that if there are cases, we ask that group (the class or year group) to go home rather than closing the entire school. This separation will not always be possible, but the times where groups crossover, such as in corridor movement, will be kept to a minimum. The track and trace is based on 15 minutes contact time within 2metres, so movement through corridors should not be an issue. However, even this we will keep to a minimum but it will be different for different schools because of their size and the nature of their buildings. In some schools, there will be staggered drop off and pick up times. Headteachers will write to you with further details for your school before the end of term.

To help us stay open, there are some things you can do to help. Please talk to your children about keeping their social distance outside of school, on the journey to school, and for secondary school pupils, to follow guidance on school transport etc. But above all, if your child or anyone in your household has any symptoms, (high temperature, persistent new cough, loss of smell or taste) keep your child at home and let us know. Get your child tested for Covid -19. Then let us know the outcome of the test.

Whilst the arrangements cannot be foolproof, they are the best way we can keep everyone safe whilst keeping schools open. Please help us to do this.

Previously, we explained that we would not require pupils to wear uniform in September given that we were not sure what the Government plans were for the Autumn. We were also mindful that some families had been hit hard financially. However, in order to help with ensuring there are not gatherings of young people out of school and to help with behaviour and attitudes in school, we have decided that secondary school pupils should be in uniform from the start of the Autumn term. If this will cause difficulties for you, please contact your school in the first instance. In Primary schools we will continue to allow parents to send their child in uniform or in other suitable clothes for school until October half term.

We will also plan for the possibility of a potential local lockdown, partial or full, so that we keep educational provision going if children cannot attend school. This provision will be through the Google Classrooms primarily, where staff can set and respond to children's work, offer support and set up live learning episodes through Google Meet. If you need help with using this, please contact your school for support.

As we approach the summer holidays, we still await details of the holiday programmes that might be on offer across the county. As soon as we hear more, we will let you know the details.

In closing, I want to thank you again for your patience and support throughout the last 4 months. It has been a challenging time for everyone and we are all longing for some normality. Hopefully, being able to open our schools fully in September will go a long way to providing that sense of getting back to normal, even if it still looks a little different.

Stay safe.

Donna

Donna Bryant

Trust Executive Leader