

7 July 2020

Dear Parents/Carers,

### **Arrangements for widening access to schools in the next academic year**

I hope that this letter finds you well. You will be aware that last Thursday the Government published its long-awaited guidance and plans for getting all pupils back to school in September. This is perhaps the most significant moment for schools since lockdown first began at the end of March. All of us recognise the impact that five months out of the normal routine of school will have had on pupils. We look forward to welcoming all pupils back to school in September and our children and young people can look forward to the routine of normal school life, and seeing their friends and teachers.

The guidance published by the Government is a long and complex document and creates a wide range of logistical challenges for schools. However, schools across the Trust are in a strong position as we have learnt a great deal in recent months through our experience in re-opening our schools in June to those pupils in scope. Whilst we have already commenced our detailed planning so that we have robust risk assessments in place for all schools, we may not be able to share the full details with you until later, possibly into the summer holidays. We want to dedicate time to getting them right as we want to create the best conditions possible for our schools to be able to welcome all pupils back in the autumn term.

It is important to remember that we are still two months away from the start of the autumn term, and we have already seen how quickly things can change. Throughout the whole period of lockdown, Government guidance has been (understandably) constantly evolving. Heads of School will write to you during the summer holidays to provide the most up-to-date information. Clearly, detailed advice will be most accurate if released closer to opening. Your next communication on the full re-opening plans will come specifically from the Head of your child's own school.

A link for what parents and carers need to know about early years providers and schools, and autumn opening is below.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/what-parents-and-carers-need-to-know-about-early-years-providers-schools-and-colleges-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-outbreak/what-parents-and-carers-need-to-know-about-early-years-providers-schools-and-colleges-in-the-autumn-term>

I have summarised some of the key aspects within the Department for Education's guidance below. This may help families consider arrangements such as childcare:

- It is intended that all pupils in all years should be able to and will be expected to return to school.
- Attendance expectations are to be re-introduced to all schools.
- Pupils will be arranged into 'protective bubbles' as now. These will be larger to encompass whole classes or year groups. School level risk assessments will determine this.

- Within these bubbles, the intention is that much of school life can resume and indeed the 'bubble rules' are somewhat different to those currently in place. As an example, staff will be allowed to change bubbles to facilitate lesson change and teacher preparation time. Movement around school will need to be minimised.
- Bubbles will also see some staggering of breaks and lunchtimes to minimise the numbers present in any one place.
- Social distancing indications are planned to vary according to age of pupil(s), but generally staff will be expected to socially distance from each other and from pupils wherever possible. Children will be expected to maintain 'age appropriate' distance from each other.
- Some areas of the curriculum may be limited for some year groups. For example, a focus on early literacy and reading in Early Years, some changes to how practical lessons e.g. PE, music or art lessons can be carried out. This again will be part of school level detail that will follow.
- The intention is to have as wide a curriculum offer as possible. Schools will be allowed to vary start and finish times, and break times to allow for a staggered arrival and departure from the school site. With this in mind, we would urge families to ensure their initial childcare arrangements for the autumn are flexible.
- In terms of transport arrangements, the guidance suggests that school buses can resume in most cases. Our secondary schools will provide more detail in due course, however, we would ask parents and carers where possible, to look at alternative travel arrangements. We understand that this may not be possible or practicable.
- There is an expectation that school uniform should be worn as normal for all children.

### Government Catch-Up Funding

We know that every child, and every home, has had a different experience with lockdown and home learning. Inevitably, there will be learning gaps to be filled when pupils return, and the Trust and school leaders have been working on a 'recovery' curriculum for the autumn term. We will be doing everything possible to ensure that gaps in lost learning are closed as quickly as possible.

We still await further detailed advice on the allocation of the catch-up funding from the Government. Our aim is to see every pupil back on track as soon as possible, and we will adapt and modify teaching to address the gaps in learning. In the early years of primary schools, there will be a push on language development, early reading and phonics. Similarly, at key stages one and two, there will be a focus on the "essentials" of reading, vocabulary, writing and mathematics. Please be assured that this will not be at the exclusion of our broader curriculum. However, it is important that our children have the "essentials" securely in place so that they can access the wider curriculum.

In our two secondary schools, priorities amongst other things, will include the swift identification of pupils who need extra support with core literacy and numeracy. Both schools run interventions in these areas and there will be an expansion of these. Heads of School and their leadership teams will have detailed catch up and recovery programmes in place. There will be a range of provisional actions across year groups that will include all pupils being assessed in the first half term and reports sent home to parents and carers on the back of this. These assessments will include reading tests. Curriculum leaders and teachers will adjust their plans to address any subject gaps. Parents and carers with children moving into Year 11 will obviously be concerned with GCSE examinations on the horizon next summer. Prior to lockdown both schools operated substantial intervention programmes at key stage four, and these plans will be in place far earlier than normal. The Government national tutoring programme (when more details emerge) will be used to target pupils in danger of not maximising their potential.

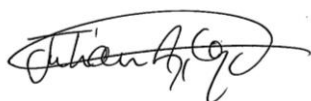
We aim to ensure that time across all schools is devoted to the emotional wellbeing of pupils. We acknowledge that re-integration back into school is something that will be on the minds of all pupils and parents/carers. As part of the preparation for this, all staff across the Trust have undertaken training delivered by an organisation called I-heart. I-heart is a non-profit organisation that educates children and young people about their innate resilience, mental health and wellbeing. As a result of the training, our schools will be able to offer a resilience curriculum. It is hoped that through this work, both pupils and staff will benefit from addressing resilience issues and dealing with real issues that are encountered in schools on a daily basis.

The summer term has been long and tiring for families and staff, but I believe there has been a sense of togetherness. The whole community has pulled together to ensure pupils felt safe and supported, and we have shown just how much can be achieved in the most difficult and challenging of circumstances. No matter what your experience of lockdown, parents and carers have been terrific, and some of your emails and letters thanking the Trust and staff have been greatly appreciated. On behalf of all staff, we want to thank you for everything you have done to support your child's success over this period, and the support you have given to our schools.

If I can remind you, the next communication detailing the approach being taken from the start of the autumn term will come specifically from the Head of your child's own school.

Thank you once again for your support and have an enjoyable summer.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Julian Appleyard', enclosed within a thin, hand-drawn oval border.

Julian Appleyard OBE  
Chief Executive Officer