

2nd June 2020

Dear Parents and Carers,

I hope that you and your families are well and are staying safe in these very difficult times. You will be aware from the recent press coverage that the Government is aiming to open schools more widely from 1st June to children in the Early Years (Nursery and Reception), Year 1 and Year 6. I am sure that we would all agree that we would like to see all children back in school full time, but the safety of our children and staff is paramount in all of our planning and decision making and we have been working together with our Headteachers/Principals to consider how we are able to do this in a timely and safe manner.

We would ask for your patience while we finalise plans to open more widely for children. We are currently evaluating each academy individually, taking into account the size of rooms, the layout of the buildings and staffing availability to consider carefully how the next phase of your child's education will look. Please be assured that as a Trust, we will not make any decision that puts a child or member of staff at risk.

The Prime Minister announced on Sunday his intention to ask schools to start to open more widely from 1st June and he confirmed on Thursday that the government's five tests have been met. Please note that this does not mean that all schools and academies will open fully for those year groups on this date.

The guidance to schools is continually changing and new guidance arrives almost daily which means plans that may have been put into place are being constantly evaluated and changed, all of which have consequences on staffing levels and risk assessments. Some of our academies will be ready to accept more children in Early Years, Year 1 and Year 6 **from Monday 8th June**. The Board of Trustees has approved this decision in the interests of the safety and welfare of our children and staff. We will ask Principals to write to you towards the end of this week with the final arrangements. It is highly likely that some academies will not be open to all year groups at the same time.

We will continue to provide childcare for the children of key workers and our most vulnerable children during the intervening time and this should be arranged with your child's academy in the usual way. Online work will continue to be set for those children not in EYFS, Year 1 and Year 6 or who do not attend during this period.

However, we are expecting a considerable increase in the number of children attending our academies and I feel it is important to point out that the experience in school will be very different to the one they left in March. Each of our academies has carried out a detailed risk assessment and assessed their capacity to be able to deliver the additional provision to Early Years, Year 1 and Year 6. In all cases, we will not be able to have the maximum of 15 children in some classes due to limitations with the room size or layout of the building. The maximum number may be considerably lower than this which will impact on the number of children we will be able to accommodate at any one time.

It is widely accepted that children, particularly very young children, will find it difficult to follow the social distance guidelines. Our academies will do their utmost to ensure that social distancing is maintained but we cannot guarantee that your child will always maintain social distancing. This is in line with the guidance published by the Department for Education.

Where possible, academies have tried to keep teachers in their current year groups but due to having to reduce class sizes it is possible that your child will not be in their normal classroom or taught by their current class teacher; the adults in the room will however be familiar to them.

Children will be placed into groups that will stay together. Groups will not be able to mix; for example, during break or lunchtime and may not be together with their usual friendship groups. Unfortunately, academies will be unable to move children between groups during this time and children will be unable to move freely around rooms or the academy.

It is likely that your child will see staff wearing Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) during this time, especially if staff must administer first aid or intimate care. It is important that parents discuss this with their child so that they are not scared should they see a member of staff wearing a face covering or gloves.

To prevent any risk of infection, there will be no physical contact between academy staff and your child. This may prove difficult with our younger children who will need reminding as they will often seek regular reassurance from adults working with them. Staff will be unable to hug children, even if they show signs of distress.

I appreciate how upsetting it may be to read this, but I hope that it gives you an idea as to how very different your child's experience of school will be from the one they left. As the Government has announced the wider opening of schools and your academy is able to do so safely, it is vital that you talk to your child about how different in look and feel their classroom and academy will be, at least in the short term. Each academy will write to you directly to outline how this will look and the new school rules that will have to be introduced to ensure everyone's safe return to school.

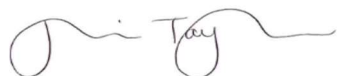
Academies are currently working on addendums to their behaviour policy, which will outline the additional rules and protocols that will need to be in place. This should form part of any communication with you.

I would strongly encourage all parents and carers to think very carefully about what is right for their child as wider opening begins. The decision to send your child back to school is entirely your own, but our staff will do everything that they can to provide the best possible experience for all children.

If parents or carers decide that they are uncomfortable sending their child back to school our academies will respect that decision. There will be no pressure about non-attendance and no fines will be administered. Your child's place at the academy they attend will not be affected. Whatever decision a parent makes this will be the right one for your child. Nobody knows your child better than you do and as a Trust we will respect and support whatever decision that you make.

Take care and stay safe.

Kind regards,



Mrs Julie Taylor
Chief Executive