

15th May 2020

Dear Parent/Carer

This is a short initial communication around the more extensive opening of academies in the Thomas Deacon Education Trust. Over the next few weeks, we'll be working hard to produce more detailed documentation around the things we will be doing to secure your child's safety on site for when they return to their school. I hope it will go some way towards alleviating the concerns you may have and to reassure you.

The following is a very brief introduction to the return to school. There is a lot of information for us to build in to our risk assessment (classrooms, drop off/pick up, break times, playgrounds, canteen, lunches, cleaning rotas, staff rotas, transport to and from school) and to convey this information will be an extensive document. Your Principal/Headteacher will communicate these plans with you, but I wanted to write to you to give information, so you have a view of what we'll be doing across the TDET family of schools.

Who will be returning to school?

Reception, Year 1 and Year 6. There are suggestions around Year 10 and Year 12 returning in some form, but this is lacking detail from the Department for Education as yet.

Why have these year groups been picked?

The three year groups have been prioritised because they are key transition years – children in Reception and Year 1 are at the very beginning of their school career and are mastering the essential basics, including counting and the fundamentals of reading and writing, and learning to socialise with their peers. Year 6 children are finishing Key Stage 2 and are preparing for the transition to secondary school and will benefit immensely from time with their friends and teachers to ensure they are ready.

When are they going back to school?

We will begin to bring children back into school in these year groups from Monday 8th June. Your Principal/Headteacher will give you clear information about the arrangements for your children in your school.

What is the science saying about children in school?

The DfE guidance is underpinned by their latest understanding of the science, which indicates that we need to take a phased approach to limit the risk of increasing the rate of transmission (often referred to as R) above 1. They have factored in:

- severity of disease in children – there is high scientific confidence that children of all ages have less severe symptoms than adults if they contract coronavirus (COVID-19)

- the age of children – there is moderately high scientific confidence that younger children are less likely to become unwell if infected with coronavirus (COVID-19)
- numbers of children going back – which needs to be limited initially then increased gradually as the science permits
- systems to reduce the size of the groups coming into contact with each other – such as smaller class sizes spread out across settings

What measures are the DfE suggesting schools take?

One of the protective measures suggested that schools take to reduce transmission is to have smaller group and class sizes. The DfE says that, unlike older children and adults, early years and primary age children cannot be expected to remain 2m apart from each other and staff. Schools, the DfE state, should therefore work through the hierarchy of measures set out in their guidance which will form the basis for our more detailed response.

In short, they are:

- avoiding contact with anyone with symptoms
- frequent hand cleaning and good hygiene practices
- regular cleaning of settings
- minimising contact and mixing

It is still important to reduce contact between children and staff as far as possible, and settings can take steps to achieve that and reduce transmission risk by ensuring children, and staff where possible, mix in a small group and keep that small group away from other people and groups. The DfE have stated that schools should look to have around 15 in a class when they re-open. For most of our classes, this is not possible, and our class sizes will be around 10.

Due to the nature of our sites, Reception, Year 1 and Year 6 are, on their return to school, able to have their own classrooms. We will need to manage carefully their access to toilets and handwashing facilities. This goes a long way to mitigating risk of transmission. More details will be provided in due course.

Will the school day be as normal?

No. Each year group on their return will have amended drop off and pick up times to keep the year groups separate and limit contact amongst parents too. Some of our schools may only offer a shortened day as lunchtime arrangements may prove to be difficult to organise safely.

My child has been working hard at home and the remote learning has been good. Can they stay at home until after the summer holidays and return in September?

The government and the Local Authority are not going to impose fines for non-attendance during this time. The decision rests with you. We're exploring the options for what we can do over this period to try and give as much support to you to continue home-learning.

I have children in other year groups and I need to go back to work – can they come to school?

Your Principal/Headteacher will have sent out a questionnaire to gather information about this option. All our planning is subject to government guidance but if we can provide care for children not in the priority year groups, we will try to accommodate it. However, it may not be possible due to the number of children in school and the number of staff available.

Will provision still be in place for the children of Key Workers, and other vulnerable children, regardless of their year group?

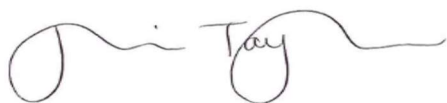
Yes. The hub approach will end and from 8th June, these children will attend provision at their own school.

I do not have all the answers as yet and with all of our TDET Principals and Headteachers, I am working hard to find answers to enable us to bring some of our children back into school safely and carefully.

The safety and well-being of children and staff is at the heart of the decisions we are making, and we will continue to keep you updated as we move forward.

In the meantime, take care of yourselves and stay safe.

Kind regards,



Mrs Julie Taylor
Chief Executive