

22 May 2020

Dear Parents/Carers,

Firstly, I hope this letter finds you and your families well.

In my update last week, I said that I would keep you abreast of the developments in our planning and response to the Government guidance on the phased re-opening of schools.

Again, I would reiterate that our obligation to the safety of our pupils and staff is our priority as we continue to tackle the challenging and complex task of implementing the Government guidance. Following a meeting of our Trust Board on Wednesday of this week, we are taking a deliberately cautious approach. As a trust of eight schools, we are determined not to be rushed during the planning and decision-making phase as we take forward a complex process of reintegration.

I want to be open and transparent with all of you about progress to date. Our work around risk assessment, health and safety and safeguarding is being co-ordinated by Mrs Joy Bell, our Director of Operations. Joy has been working alongside me, the Trust leadership team and our Estates Manager, Mr Ian Corbett. This group have been working in a phased way with all Heads of School, as well as alongside external health and safety and risk consultants. As a result of this we have arrived at a position whereby myself, as Chief Executive Officer, and the Trust Board can now confidently say that the risk assessments have been validated by external health and safety consultants. Needless to say, our work in this area has been of exceptional importance to us.

Areas that have been covered include:

- Stringent social distancing measures;
- Movement around the school, internally and externally;
- Ensuring all people who are extremely clinically vulnerable are put at no risk and carefully assessing risk for staff and pupils who are clinically vulnerable;
- Minimising contact with those who are unwell or displaying symptoms of the virus;
- Hand washing;
- Respiratory hygiene;
- Cleaning frequently touched surfaces;
- The careful consideration of timetable and layout;
- Approaches to the care of those with intimate need;
- The approach to those who become unwell whilst in school;
- Reducing movement;
- Staggering assemblies, breaks and drop-off and pick-up times;
- Removing and safely storing unnecessary items;
- Toilet protocols;
- Ensuring that no unnecessary gathering points for parents and pupils are established; and
- Providing travel guidance, as appropriate.

The validation of our risk assessments now allows us to plan more finely what phased re-opening will look like. I know from directly speaking to a number of families in the community that, provided that we have done all in our power to ensure their safety, there is a shared keenness to get our children and young people back into schools at the earliest point.

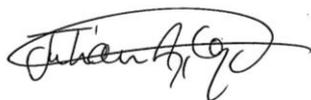
I also recognise, however, your right as a family to express to us your legitimate concerns about your child returning to school. It is my determination to do all that I can to allay those concerns. This is why, as a Trust, we are taking our time and not racing ahead. Therefore, before any children return to school, we will have to provide time to undertake professional activities without children or young people being present.

You will note that the Government has said that they will make the final decision in relation to the re-opening of schools on 28 May 2020. This, together with The Department for Education not having yet issued guidance on further provision for Year 10, means that, as I am sure that you appreciate, we are making plans in a fluid planning environment.

Following on from this communication, our next communication will be on Tuesday 26 May 2020 specifically from the Head of School which your child attends. This will set out in greater detail the phased approach from week commencing the 1 June 2020. This communication will detail decisions on each year group. I would say in advance that our cautious approach to start with means that we will scale up our provision only when we have reassured ourselves that we are ready to do so.

Though there are many challenges ahead, may I take this opportunity to say just how much I am looking forward to beginning the process of re-opening our schools. I thank you for the response to the parental survey which has been enormously helpful in our planning. The choice is yours as to whether you choose to send your child back to school and we will respect your decision either way.

Best wishes

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Julian Appleyard', written in a cursive style.

Julian Appleyard OBE
Chief Executive Officer