

Monday 1st June 2020

Dear Parents, Guardians, Carers, Children and Young People

I promised that I would write today to set out our plans for the week ahead, and our broad plans over the forthcoming weeks.

I know that your schools have been in touch with you to set out their **proposed** plans for the week ahead, and how they are seeking to further open up to enable more children to return – whilst remaining clear on the guidance for schools and putting **safety and capacity first**.

From today all those members of Primary School staff who are able to now return to the school environment have come back into school for training, and to begin to put our plans into action. This has, and will involve the changing of learning environments, zoning spaces, setting up provision for lunches, breaktimes, toileting and access to handwashing... and much, much more. Each of our schools is being checked, and rechecked each day, cleaned and re-cleaned, and thoroughly 'tested' to ensure that we are all happy that the risk assessments provide the right safeguards to enable our first phase of additional pupils to return, where possible.

These next 3 – 5 training and preparation days are critical for our schools to be in a position to open up to more pupils. We do not anticipate too many significant changes to the proposed plans that schools have shared with you, however, our fundamental principle remains that if we are unsure that we can provide the appropriate safeguarding or staffing then our plans may have to be adapted, changed or halted until we are able to ensure that we are able to open to more pupils. I appreciate that this still gives a level of uncertainty at this stage, but I am sure that you will appreciate that we do not wish to make any promises that we can't ultimately fulfil; and the safety of everyone is paramount in our decision-making.

Once we are happy, and in agreement with the Local Boards and School Leaders that the schools are able to open up to more pupils your school will confirm the arrangements with you. The coming 'back' to school, for those who are able to, is going to seem a little odd – the curriculum won't be the same; it is likely that some of the children won't have their 'usual' teacher; the learning environment won't feel or look the same; and the day will run differently. The coming into school will look and feel different too – socially distancing drop-offs and pick-ups need the help and support of everyone to ensure that we can keep each other safe and well too.

And we must not forget that a significant proportion of our school pupils, and many staff are unable to return to school at this time, and do not know when their return will be at this stage. There will be mixed emotions about how some are returning to school, whether they should be returning, and concerns about the impact on families, friendships, and relationships in general. Learning will look different for everyone as we start to implement this next phase of change in our schools, and whilst we will do our very best to do all that we can to support learner both in and out of school, I ask your continued support and patience as we figure out how best to do this. We will, of course, keep you informed at each step of the way as to what is happening and the impact on you all.

As we move into 'Phase 1' of welcoming more children back into school we will be taking time to assess how this is working and will constantly be assessing risk and capacity. Once we have a clear understanding of how things are working, and that they are working well, we will be in a position to reassess and to see if we may be able to extend the offer to more children.

We will be doing this on a school-by-school basis and in direct consultation with your Local Boards and School Leaders, rather than across the whole Trust, as it is vital that any further 'opening up' of schools must reflect what is possible within the guidance and within the context of each school. We will continue to work with the schools to assess whether further 'opening-up' is possible and if satisfied the school will contact you directly to let you know what those next steps might be. This stage is a little way off at the moment, but I wanted to share our commitment with you at this stage – we are all doing all that we can in the circumstances.

Once Local Boards, Senior Leaders, Directors and the Trust Team are satisfied that we are able to begin 'Phase 1' from this week, your school will contact you directly to outline what can be provided, and how this will take place. Schools will also confirm as soon as possible what the home-learning offer will look like for pupils not able to attend schools during this continued period of partial school closures. If there are any changes to the proposed plans, be that a delay in the 'opening' date, or a change to pupil numbers, this will be linked to our risk assessments and will be based on our 'safety and capacity first' model. We will do what we can to ensure that we can move to our proposed model as quickly as possible, depending on the circumstances.

I hope that this letter, along with the information from your school this week will give you further clarity on this next step into 'Phase 1'. I would like to thank you for your continued support, feedback and help as we tread carefully into this new 'new' way of working; and to express my thanks to the staff teams and Local Boards of your schools who are working tirelessly to do the very best that they can in a constantly changing environment.

I will continue to keep you updated as to our plans and our next steps as guidance and the Covid-19 plans change and adapt over the forthcoming weeks.

Keep safe and well, and my thanks again.

With kind regards,

Jez Piper

CEO