

12<sup>th</sup> July 2020

Dear Parents and Carers,

I hope you and your families are safe and well, and are looking forward to all children returning to school as much as we are. Returning to school is vital for children's education and for their wellbeing, and as you know, where it has been possible to do so we have encouraged as many children as we can to return to school this term.

From September, school will be compulsory for all children, however I would like to reassure you that we will make it as safe as we possibly can. I firmly believe that our schools are safe places, and are COVID secure, and this has been proven during this term. We have based our decisions, policies and procedures on the current ["Guidance for Opening: Schools"](#) document.

There will be some slight changes to how we have traditionally functioned, and this is the result of developing ways of working to keep everyone as safe as possible.

### Attendance

Missing out on more time in the classroom risks pupils falling further behind. Those with higher overall absence tend to achieve less well in both primary and secondary school. School attendance will therefore be mandatory again from the beginning of the Autumn Term. This means from that point, the usual rules on school attendance will apply, including:

- parents' duty to ensure that their child attends regularly at school where the child is a registered pupil at school and they are of compulsory school age;
- schools' responsibilities to record attendance and follow up absence
- the availability to issue sanctions, including fixed penalty notices in line with local authorities' codes of conduct

Notifying your school about a child's absence will continue as per the normal arrangements before COVID-19.

### Mitigation

In order to minimise coronavirus (COVID -19) risks, our strategy is to reduce contact with large numbers as much as possible, and therefore we are creating class bubbles by grouping children together, avoiding contact between groups, arranging classrooms with forward facing desks (as we have already), and staff maintaining distance from pupils, other classes and other staff as much as possible.

It is important that we all follow the system of protective measures that we are all familiar with. Essential measures include:

- a requirement that people who are ill stay at home
- robust hand and respiratory hygiene
- enhanced cleaning arrangements
- active engagement with NHS Test and Trace

- formal consideration of how to reduce contacts and maximise distancing between those in school wherever possible and minimise potential for contamination so far as reasonably practicable

### **School Day**

With this in mind, we will be operating a staggered start system for arriving and departing from school, the details of which will be communicated to you by your Headteacher.

In order to maintain the safety of both children and staff, we will continue to close our schools at 1.30pm on Friday afternoons to ensure a thorough deep clean can take place, and allow the teaching staff to receive their statutory Planning, Preparation and Assessment Time. Prior to COVID -19 teachers from the Trust would go across the schools to release teachers to enable them to have their Planning, Preparation and Assessment Time. As this is a strategy we can no longer use due to the risk of spreading virus between schools, we have decided to continue with our current arrangements. This will prevent cross contamination of the class bubble by other adults. This will not affect statutory teaching time and all children will continue to receive their current entitlement as at the majority of schools within the Trust we have a longer school day than most due to the 8.30am start.

From September all schools will be open from 8.30 am to facilitate the staggered starts and will close at 3.30 pm. Where possible we will try to ensure that KS2 has the longest day and that siblings can arrive and depart from school at the same time. Wrap around care will be available at all schools on Friday afternoons, but will be fee payable, booked in advance. Details of how to book will follow later on in the week.

### **Break and Lunchtime**

Throughout the day the children will remain in their 'bubble' and will not mix with other 'bubbles'. Each class (bubble) will have their own staggered play and lunchtime. Lunches will be eaten in the classroom and not in the dining room. Children will be able to have a school dinner or bring a packed lunch. Lunch boxes will be stored in the classroom. From September, school dinners will cost £2.50 per day for children in nursery and Key Stage 2. If catering staff are absent from school due to illness/self-isolation, on the second day of absence, we would ask all parents to provide their children with a packed lunch. Free school meal children will be provided with funding to assist with this, however we would not be able to extend this to the Infant Free School Meal initiative.

### **Care Club**

At Richard Crosse, St. Mary's and The Howard, Care Club will operate from 7.30am -8.30am and 3.30pm-6.00pm Monday to Thursday, and 7.30am to 8.30 am and 1.30pm -4.30pm on Friday (Friday's early closure will be extended should there be demand).

Places will be limited and will need to be booked and paid for in advance. Strict social distancing measures will be adhered to, to ensure everyone's safety. Care clubs will continue to operate within the school hall.

At Anson, on Friday afternoons from 1.30pm to 3.30pm, after school care will be available. This service will need to be booked and paid for in advance and the Trust's Care Club fees will apply.

Your school will provide details of how you can book later on this week.

### **Supply teachers and other temporary or peripatetic teachers**

For the Autumn Term we will be limiting the number of adults coming into school to avoid cross contamination and therefore we will not be procuring the services of peripatetic music teachers, supply staff, sports coaches. There will also be limited cross school working within the Trust, with all meetings taking place remotely as they do now.

### **Educational Visits**

We are not planning any educational visits during the Autumn Term and there will be no swimming lessons.

### **School Uniform**

From September, our normal school uniform policy will apply and children will be expected to wear uniform. Uniform plays a valuable role in contributing to the ethos of the school and setting an appropriate tone.

Uniforms do not need to be cleaned any more often than usual, nor do they need to be cleaned using methods which are different from normal.

### **PE Kit**

All children should have a PE kit in school which should be taken home on Fridays in order to be washed for the following week.

### **Books and Equipment**

The guidance states that children can share equipment within their class as long as strict hygiene measures are in place. Reading Books will be sent home however, we ask that more care is taken of them to ensure safety.

### **Acts of Worship/Assemblies**

There will be a daily act of worship/assembly for the whole school however, this will be done remotely with all classes taking part virtually.

### **ChromeBooks**

We depend more and more on IT in our daily lives. The current pandemic has highlighted this and I urge parents to support our ChromeBook Initiative in order to help their children both in and out of school. Please could you ensure that you complete the Google Form that has been emailed to you so that we may judge whether we proceed with this.

### **Parents Evening**

During the third week back, you will be invited to an online parents' consultation meeting with your child's class teacher. If you are unable to access a computer, we will offer a telephone consultation. Further details will be announced in the new term.

### **Risk Assessments**

We continue to revise and update our risk assessments and all risk assessments can be accessed on the school website.

## **General Public Health Guidance**

Prevention – Minimise contact with individuals who are unwell by ensuring that those who have coronavirus (COVID-19) symptoms, or who have someone in their household who does, do not attend school.

Clean hands thoroughly more often than usual – Children and adults have access to hand sanitiser and soap and water and are encouraged to wash hands frequently.

Ensure good respiratory hygiene by promoting the ‘catch it, bin it, kill it’ approach.

Enhanced cleaning, including cleaning frequently touched surfaces.

Minimise contact between individuals and maintain social distancing wherever possible.

The majority of staff in education settings will not require PPE beyond what they would normally need for their work. PPE is only needed in a very small number of cases, including:

- where an individual child or young person becomes ill with coronavirus (COVID-19) symptoms while at schools, and only then if a distance of 2 metres cannot be maintained.
- where a child or young person already has routine intimate care needs that involves the use of PPE, in which case the same PPE should continue to be used.

Engage with NHS Test and Trace process – Please notify your school of any illness.

## **Finally...**

We are looking forward to welcoming back all of our children and families in September. Please be assured that we will do everything we possibly can to ensure the safety of all. We have experienced unprecedented times and many are feeling anxious and worried.

Your children are extremely important to us and we will endeavour to make their return to ‘normal’ schooling as smooth as possible. In the news, we read a lot of unhelpful, doom laden language, referring to ‘lost generations’, to ‘damaged’ and even ‘scarred’ cohorts of children and to educational ‘catastrophe’.

Not only does this massively distract from the many positive attributes of home learning and more time for social interaction in families that we have experienced, but it also creates a sense of fatalism and helplessness and we risk this becoming self-fulfilling. As the school and the curriculum resumes to a new normal, it is important that we don’t project anxiety onto our children. Yes, there will be areas of the curriculum that the children may have forgotten and a few skills that are a bit rusty and yes children will be anxious about the future, but this can be overcome.

We can make this a positive experience about moving forwards, building on, re-establishing, consolidating and developing confidence to embrace the future. At our schools we have the skills and capability, through quality first teaching and a committed staff, to ensure that the education the children receive is the best it can possibly be, whilst maintaining their social and emotional wellbeing and helping them to cope with what life has in store.

Finally, for your information, from September 1<sup>st</sup>, the Trust will become known as The Staffordshire Schools Multi Academy Trust. The reason for the change is in line with our growth strategy and is designed to make us more appealing to other schools who may wish to consider joining us.

I wish you all a lovely summer holiday.

Yours sincerely,

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

Mr PJ Lovern  
Chief Executive Officer