

Wednesday 3rd June 2020

To: Reach South Academy Trust Schools LGB Chairs

Dear Chair,

While I appreciate that LGBs remain stood down in the Trust, I wanted to write to you all to advise you on how the Trust has approached the Government's request that we open our schools to more children from 1st June.

Since March, as a Trust we have ensured that all the children of critical workers and vulnerable children have had access to high quality 'EduCare'. During this period, I am delighted to report that we have had no reported cases of infection within any of our settings. Initially around 1% of our pupils attended this provision across the Trust. That number has increased over the last two-months and stood at around 4.5% at the end of May. School staff have worked in three-week rotas to support the on-site EduCare with around 80% of school staff being fit and able to attend work at any one time. At the start of June, 84% of staff report available to work on site.

The vast majority of our pupils have remained at home and our staff have worked incredibly hard to provide high quality home learning and pastoral care. However, we all know, that prolonged exclusion from school has a detrimental impact on all children's education. We also know that for some children that impact will be particularly damaging, especially children from poorer backgrounds. This provides the real dilemma of opening up our schools for more of our children as soon as possible while also protecting our pupils and our staff during the pandemic.

The DfE has issued guidance for schools on how we should plan to open our schools for more pupils:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-school-closures/guidance-for-schools-about-temporarily-closing>

The overview of the scientific information that the government has based their consideration of wider school opening on can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/overview-of-scientific-information-on-coronavirus-covid-19>

Leaders within our schools have been working hard to reorganise our schools to conform to the Department for Education (DfE) and Public Health England guidance for the widening opening. We have been clear in our guidance to schools in stating that our first priority is the safety of our pupils and our staff.

Over the past few weeks, school leaders have been completing comprehensive risk assessments so that they can identify hazards and the actions required to address these issues. We have provided additional scrutiny to the health and safety aspects of those assessments and have used external risk management advisors to robustly challenge our planning.

In opening for more pupils each academy will operate strict procedures for maintaining hygiene levels and the use of the premises. The new procedures 'Estates Management for Academies Commencing Operation beyond Providers of EduCare' can be accessed here <https://www.reachsouth.org/covid-19> along with the Trust's guidance on the use of personal protection equipment (PPE).

Social distancing will be managed by:

- Staff and pupils will be assigned to a class 'bubble'. They will complete all activities in this bubble and will not mix with pupils from other class 'bubbles' to reduce the risk of infection spread.
- The start and end of the school day will be staggered to help with social distancing. Break times will also be staggered.
- Classrooms have been organised to support social distancing, each child will have a 2m square, home base that will be marked on floors along with circulation spaces.
- The maximum number of pupils in each classroom has been determined by its physical capacity to maintain the 2m social distancing.
- Pupils will have packed lunches that can be eaten in a defined space, usually the classroom.

On 20th May, Dean Ashton wrote to every employee to explain in detail how we are ensuring the safety of our staff as far as we reasonably can during these difficult times. Dean also wrote to all parents on 21st May and those letters can be found at <https://www.reachsouth.org/covid-19>

The Board has established a Sub-Committee of Trustees to monitor, scrutinise and support our leaders in the planning and implementation of the wider opening of schools. Yesterday, that committee gave approval for the CEO to authorise the wider opening of each academy providing that a certificate of readiness to open was signed off by the Director of Learning Environment, the Headteacher and the CEO. The signatures were to confirm that all of the health and safety procedures, premises checks and staff preparations had been completed. The certificate for wider opening also sets out the maximum number of pupils that can be admitted to the academy so that the 2m social distancing can be maintained in each class bubble. I am delighted to be able to advise that the following academies have been certified for wider opening from this week for pupils in reception, year-1 and year-6 (and nursery where applicable):

- Drake Primary Academy
- Goosewell Primary Academy
- High Street Primary Academy
- Hill View Primary Academy
- Malmesbury Park Primary Academy
- Marlborough Primary Academy
- Morice Town Primary Academy
- Parkfield School

- Pilgrim Primary Academy
- Plymouth Academy of Creative Arts
- Stoke Damerel Primary Academy

Stuart Road Primary requires some building works to be completed and so we expect them to open more widely on 10th June. Springfields expects to open more widely on both sites on 8th June. The UTC Plymouth, along with our other secondary provisions, are planning for taking back year 10s and 12s on a part time basis from 15th June.

The Trust will monitor carefully the numbers of pupils actually attending from the priority groups over the coming weeks. We will also monitor carefully the Covid-19 infection rates in the areas served by our academies and review the wider opening if infection rates start to increase.

The full Board of Trustees next meets on 9th July. The Board will review the standing down of LGBs at that meeting. If the Covid-19 'lock-down' is continuing to be eased by the Government, then we will consider the reestablishment of the LGBs from the start of the Autumn term.

Thank you for your continued support for our academies and their staff.

With best wishes



Marcus Agius
Chairman
Reach South Academy Trust