



Westerton Primary Academy

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Leodis
Academies
Trust



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13th May 2020

Dear Parents, Carers and Colleagues

COVID 19 – reopening update

In line with government guidance and assurances that it is safe to do so, we are in the process of compiling a detailed plan to begin to reopen the academy from the 1st June. Our planning will continue unless the scientific evidence, guiding the government, shows this to be detrimental. In this case, of course, our plans will be postponed.

For an academy the size of Westerton, with 708 children crammed into a very congested building, ordinarily, even without the issue of a pandemic, you will appreciate there is much to consider. We still only have just the one hall and extremely narrow corridors, much less than 2m wide. In order to open any of our year groups, with 90 children in each cohort, the prevalent inclusivity concerns amongst the first year groups to be welcomed back (Reception, Nursery, Y1 and Y6) must also be mitigated to ensure Health and Safety of all children and staff. Socially distancing with younger children is extremely difficult, socially distancing with children who have very high tariff challenging behaviours due to Social Emotional Mental Health concerns simply is not possible and puts everyone concerned at risk of spreading the virus.

Staff Survey

Whilst all the unions connected with our profession take issue with the government over the current guidance, we will still continue to plan unless compelled to do otherwise. This will firstly entail the updated surveying of all colleagues. We need the most current accurate picture to see which staff are in Tier 1, a shielded category and prevented from working on the premises, Tier 2 where they are caring for those who are shielding and it is therefore inadvisable for them to work at school or Tier 3. The latter meaning they are well, not still self-isolating and are, therefore, available for work on the premises. Colleagues currently in Tier 1 and Tier 2 have been able to work from home, they have not been in our Emergency Provision and we would expect them to continue working from home if they are well enough to do so. We also have many staff who are parents. They may well have children on roll in other schools, still unable to attend in Y2, Y3, Y4 or Y5 from the 1st June.

Phased Return

We are planning a phased return for the children from the 1st June which will begin with Reception and Y6. From the 8th June we may be able to welcome back Nursery and Y1. Other year groups will be added each week thereafter if it is deemed safe to do so and supported by the scientific evidence.

Class sizes can be of no more than **15 children** to facilitate social distancing as much as possible and this will mean each class will be split into two groups, A and B, who will have a **partial timetable** only. 'A' will

attend on Mondays and Tuesdays each week whilst 'B' will attend on Thursdays and Fridays. Children will only access one classroom to minimise risk and facilitate cleaning.

There will be **no attendance at school on Wednesdays**. The premises will be cleaned on that day and staff will have their time to plan and prepare for children attending school and staying at home. We are hopeful that this time will be sufficient for them to plan for both tasks.

There will be **staggered start and end times** and staggered breaks. Entry will be through **designated gates and fire doors** of classrooms where possible.

Children will need to bring a **packed lunch** and will eat in their classrooms. Packed lunches may be provided by available catering staff from Leodis for children who are entitled to Free School Meals.

Further specifics of the plan are very extensive will, we hope, serve to reassure colleagues, parents and children nearer the time, if reopening does go ahead.

Parent Survey

There is now a need to survey the parents of the children of **Reception and Year 6** initially to see if they intend to send their children to school from the 1st June. **Nursery and Y1** will be surveyed for their intentions for the 8th June. This will help us to consider the numbers of staff needed against the Tier 3 numbers available and we would appreciate your responses to the survey as soon as possible.

Please understand, there is no legal requirement for parents to send their children to the school at this time, you will not be fined for non-attendance. Should parents still prefer to home school whilst they continue to work from home, our staff will continue to support this through Tapestry and See-Saw. The government have been very clear that employers must be supportive of employees needing to work at home at this time.

The additional planning and preparation of the school premises will be extensive. Thus the whole school including our Emergency Provision will be **closed** for the **Half Term** break from Monday 25th to Friday 29th May. Thank you for your understanding with this.

As the government is now encouraging return to work **where possible**, we are receiving more requests for current Emergency Provision places. Unfortunately we cannot offer more at this time. The places we have are filled with our previously identified vulnerable children and those for whom **both parents** are critical key workers, saving lives with no alternative child care. It has not been possible to broaden the criteria beyond this and we are very grateful to those who are eligible for adjusting their shift patterns wherever possible to help minimise the risks at school.

As these circumstances continue, our updates will also continue to consider the evolving guidance and the **widely disparate views** as events unfold. Balancing the economic concerns with Health and Safety is truly awful and we do not envy the government, but the loss of loved ones does put things in perspective and we do reiterate our condolences to those who have told us of their bereavements at this time. It is not easy for anyone but we remain very grateful for our close-knit supportive community and hope we can all help each other to stay safe and alert. Thank you.

Yours sincerely

Stephanie Makin
Principal and the Westerton Team