

Dear Parents and Carers,

Having seen the amount of emotive media coverage about education in recent weeks and understanding the challenging decisions you are all facing on sending your child/ren back to school, I have decided it would be prudent to write a weekly update to ensure you have the latest information on our plans. As well as giving you an accurate picture of how we are educating your children, it is my intention to be clear about why we are making these decisions as there are many challenges ahead as we try to reintegrate your children into a very different kind of educational setting. Unfortunately, due to the guidance we need to follow, not all of our decisions will meet the needs of all of our parents. However, any and all these decisions will be made with your children's safety and the safety of the staff in all of our Academies as the priority.

Provision This Week

Having now had the time to do some early reviews of how the Year 6 children attending school have settled in, I thought it would be useful to share these findings. There has been a 62% uptake of children coming back to school this week (percentage based on total number of Year 6 children across the Trust and critical worker children currently eligible for school provision). Across all Academies, the systems put into place have been successful and all children have reintegrated well, adhering to social distancing practices. Children have been happy to be back amongst friends and teachers have been happy to see their pupils. Understandably, there have been some instances where a level of anxiety has been shown by some children on returning to school. This, however, was short-lived as they adjusted to school life with support from staff.

Meeting demand for places

As parents in Nursery, Reception, Year 1 and Year 6 have been informed, the biggest challenge we currently face is an increasing demand for places. As more parents return to work and/or parents become more comfortable with sending their children back to school, we have seen a substantial increase in numbers. Obviously, we are delighted with more children attending school, but with a reduced staff availability and class sizes being reduced to a maximum of 15 children, some schools have already found meeting the increased demand difficult. I would like to reassure you that we are doing everything we can to safely reintegrate children to be with teachers and friends. Currently our strategy is still, wherever possible, to open provision in this order;

Reception/Nursery – 8th June

Year 1 – 15th June

A survey will be sent out every Monday to Nursery, Reception, Years 1 and 6 parents to ensure demand is not greater than available places.

If we are unable (for safety reasons) to offer this provision, we will contact parents to let them know the alternative plans. You may be aware that the government are in the process of planning for the return of all other year groups before the summer holidays. As it stands it

is my belief that the reintegration of all children into schools under the current guidance would be impossible. The only strategy I can foresee where this would work would be to have a rota basis where children attend on a Monday, Wednesday and Friday the first week and Tuesday and Thursday of the next. My fear is that for the many parents who need to work, this will be unacceptable. While this is conjecture at present, I felt sharing this issue would help you understand the one of our many challenges.

Communication

Having been a primary school teacher and headteacher myself, I understand and hold dear to the principle that local communities should have ownership of their local school and feel we have done this as a Trust. Throughout this period, our approach has been to create an over-arching Trust strategy with the operational control resting with the Headteachers and LGBs. Head teachers are able to raise any concerns they may have with the Trust and together we can agree to adapt the strategy to meet local needs. I also meet online with Chairs of LGBs which gives us an opportunity to share strategy and discuss any concerns and suggestions of how to meet their individual school needs.

Parental Question and Answer Sessions with Health Professionals

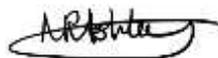
I would like to take this opportunity to thank Dr Raj Lodh and Dan Wilson for holding question and answer sessions for parents and staff across the Trust. These sessions have been very informative and reassuring for parents and staff. If you were not able to attend, your headteacher can forward the audio link to you.

Home Learning

All schools across the Trust have had autonomy to run home learning in a way that best suits their circumstances. There is a potential that some form of home learning could be in operation for some time to come. The school improvement team is therefore, in the process of reviewing home learning to investigate whether we could support our schools further. This will include aligning provision, if needed, and purchasing additional resources to support in this approach.

I hope this letter has given some insight into the strategy we are following and the numerous challenges we face. I am keen to hear your views and will be creating a short questionnaire next week to ask for feedback on your views of the current situation and how we can assist you further, where possible.

Kindest regards,



Nigel Ashley

CEO

Elevate MAT