

9th September 2020

Dear Parent and Carers

Return to schools in Heartlands Community Trust

We are truly delighted to be welcoming all our young people back to school. There is a sense of excitement and anticipation is present in both schools. We know it will feel different for a while and that we have new ways of using the spaces to make sure we are as safe as possible but this is outweighed by the joy of being with friends and with colleagues. Thank you for your support during a very challenging past few months. We really appreciate how you have worked collaboratively with the schools to ensure that we were able to support you and your child to the best of our ability.

Education is such an important part of your child's success and the stepping-stone to achieving their aspirations. The Government have now restored compulsory attendance and now expect our schools to account for all absences and we will certainly be doing what is required by law. However, we are eager to see our attendance figures return to normal so that no child is left behind and that every child gets equal access to education without the barriers caused by technology or a lack of access to expert teachers and support staff.

I write this letter so you can have full confidence in what our schools are doing to ensure your child is safe and happy as they return to a full learning experience and a rich curriculum in our Trust schools – The Grove and Heartlands High School.

The Trust Central Team has been regularly in touch with our headteachers and we are very confident that our schools are ready and well prepared. We have carefully read all the Government guidance and made sure that the best possible measures are in place so we can do our bit to restrict transmission of Covid 19 in the wider community. I want you to feel confident too. A key part of our work has been risk assessing activities and putting plans in place to reduce risk. Whilst no one can eliminate risk entirely, we can work together to minimise it.

Our schools have been in contact directly to explain the changes. This will include children sitting in rows rather than face to face and there may be different lunchtime and breaktime arrangements so that children and young people can socialise within their learning groups or 'bubbles' but not mix with other bubbles.

In The Grove, each department is an allocated 'bubble' and in Heartlands it is your child's year group so that specialist subjects can be taught.

You can help us by:

- Reassuring your child. With so much on the news about Covid19, your child may be nervous. Give them space to talk about their fears and feelings.
- If your child shows any symptoms of Covid 19, do not send them to school. Arrange a test online via www.nhs.uk This will usually be returned within 24 hours. You must notify the school if the test is positive so that you and the school can take appropriate steps.
- Please support your school with any changes to start or finish time or changes to the structure of the school day. This is to ensure that children can enter and move around safely and calmly.
- Modelling what social distancing means and wearing a mask if you accompany your child on the journey to or from school and if you are near to other parents or young people.

- However tempting, children should not approach people from another bubble in school or outside as far as is possible. Our schools have clear expectations around children's ability to understand and follow instructions at a level that is appropriate to them – and you can help by showing your understanding and support in what you say. We know we are dealing with the spread of a serious virus but we also know the effects on our children if they do not receive their education and so we live with some inconveniences and some routines we may not like.
- Walking or cycling is great exercise and being in the outdoors gives further protection. Whilst TFL will be providing school buses they will not be able to carry the usual number of passengers.
- Children over the age of 10 must wear a face covering on public transport. It is not necessary to wear them in school so your child will need a sealed bag to keep them in during the day. A sealable lunch bag would be ideal.

A small number of pupils will still be unable to attend in line with public health advice because they are self-isolating and have had symptoms or a positive test result themselves, or because they are a close contact of someone who has coronavirus (COVID-19). If your child is unable to attend school for this reason, you should talk to your school about what support is in place in terms of remote education.

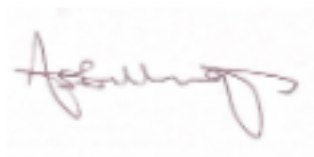
Registers will be taken as normal from the start of term as they were up until Lockdown and there will be an expectation that your child is back at school.

You might find the following resources helpful:

- [Ebug](#) is a resource to explain to children of primary and secondary school age about the Covid19 and how to keep safe.
- [Back to school safely](#) is government guidance for parents on returning to school.

If there is anything about the return to school arrangements that you do not understand or would like to explore further please do not hesitate to get in touch with your school. The schools and the Trust will continue to update you as necessary through our websites and newsletters.

With best wishes



Anthony Billings
Chief Executive Officer
Heartlands Community Trust