

13 May 2020

Dear Parent / Carer

Government guidance is now published which outlines the partial reopening of schools from 1 June 2020. I wish to inform you of the principles and processes that The Three Rivers Learning Trust will follow, to ensure a safe school environment for all.

### **Principles for re-opening**

1. We are committed to reopening in a calm and well organised manner, which reassures pupils, parents and staff that their school is a safe place to learn and work, and that all government guidance is followed carefully.
2. We are committed to supporting the welfare and wellbeing of our pupils and staff, recognising that this is an anxious period for all.
3. We will reopen in a carefully considered manner, basing our decisions on the best available evidence, and we will only reopen each school once we are convinced that our staffing levels, revised systems and plans are effective.
4. Monday 1 June is the earliest designated opening date. We have been given some flexibility with the date for reopening, and it is likely that we will reopen for the designated years groups during the week beginning 1 June, although not necessarily on 1 June for all groups.

### **Priority Groups in our schools**

1. Schools are asked to continue to prioritise places for the most vulnerable pupils and for the children of Key Workers, should they require a place, irrespective of year group.
2. At Abbeyfields, Harbottle, Stobhillgate and Thropton First Schools, we will then prioritise pupils in Nursery, Reception and Year 1.
3. At Chantry, Dr Thomlinson and Newminster Middle Schools we will prioritise pupils in Year 6. The government has asked Middle Schools to remain in line with Primary Schools in reopening for Year 6, to ensure equality of provision for this year group across the country.
4. At King Edward's, pupils in Year 10 and Year 12 will receive some face to face contact before the end of the summer term, to support remote learning. Further details will be sent to you in due course.

## **The Department for Education (DfE) rationale**

The DfE [guidance](#) states that younger children are being prioritised in the first phases of wider opening, because:

- There is moderately high scientific confidence in evidence suggesting younger children are less likely to become unwell if infected with coronavirus (COVID-19)
- Evidence shows the particularly detrimental impact which time spent out of education can have upon them; and
- Older children are more likely to have higher numbers of contacts outside of school so pose a greater transmission risk, and they are typically better able to learn at home

The guidance provides the government's latest understanding of the science, which indicates that we need to take a phased approach to limit the risk of increasing the rate of transmission:

- There is high scientific confidence that children of all ages have less severe symptoms than adults if they contract COVID-19
- There is moderately high scientific confidence that younger children are less likely to become unwell if infected with COVID-19
- Numbers of children going back need to be limited initially then increased gradually as the science permits; and
- Systems to reduce the size of the groups coming into contact with each other – such as smaller class sizes spread out across settings – need to be implemented

## **Protective measures**

The guidance on [protective measures](#) provides the basis for our site and organisational plans. Our rationale is to minimise the number of contacts within school and therefore pupils will not be taught in their usual classes, which will be reduced in size, to enable social distancing to be maintained.

## **It is not recommended that either pupils or staff in schools use PPE.**

Instead, we will follow the guidance to ensure -

- Regular handwashing
- Regular cleaning of surfaces etc
- Staggered breaks and lunch
- Social distancing within fixed small groups of 15 pupils maximum

The DfE has published [guidance for parents](#) which I encourage you to read carefully. This guidance states that the government is asking schools and settings to open more widely *from* 1<sup>st</sup> June. As described earlier in this letter, it sets out which groups are expected to return to school, expectations of attendance and Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ's).

**Pupils and staff who experience symptoms of Covid-19 must not attend school, but should inform the school immediately. Covid - 19 testing is available for any pupil attending school or member of staff experiencing symptoms, via referral from the school.**

### **Staffing and the Curriculum**

Schools have been given some flexibility in delivering the curriculum, which recognises the potential difficulty in staffing levels and at times the provision of specialist teachers. We will, of course, make all learning meaningful and relevant, although it may not always follow the published curriculum during this period. We will identify the progress made during the period of remote learning and any gaps in learning.

We have a number of staff who are in the vulnerable group category and will not be returning to work in school at this point. Should staffing levels fall below the requirement to keep pupils safe in small socially distanced groups, then the school may follow a part time timetable for some pupils for a period of time.

Pupils with additional needs will be supported on the return to school and we will aim to replicate previous arrangements and staffing. Where this might not be possible, we will always contact parents / carers to discuss any proposed changes to arrangements.

### **Remote Learning**

Schools will continue to deliver materials and content for remote learning for those year groups who are not returning to school at this point. The year groups who will continue to access remote learning only are Years, 2, 3 and 4 in our First Schools, Years 5, 7 and 8 in our middle schools and Year 9 at the High School. Years 10 and 12 will also continue to receive remote learning, as will pupils who are not returning for medical or other reasons. As teachers resume teaching in school we may use more of the nationally available materials, such as the Oak National Academy and BBC Learning. This will support the workload of teachers, as we move into the new phase.

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## **Transition for pupils in Years 4 and Year 8**

We hope that both Year 4 and Year 8 will be able to return to school before the end of the summer term and that they will be able to complete a transition process to support progression to their new school. However, we are also finalising transition plans, which can proceed virtually if necessary and may still involve some time in the new school in July, if possible. Further information will follow from your (new school) Headteacher in due course.

### **Next steps**

Your Headteacher is working with their senior teams to fully implement the DfE guidance prior to reopening. They will contact you very shortly to establish the exact number of pupils who are likely to return to school for this next stage, and to provide more detailed information about school specific arrangements and requirements. Further guidance from the DfE is anticipated and we will communicate with you regularly via your Headteacher and school as our plans develop.

Thank you once again for your support and patience during this very difficult time.

Yours sincerely



Simon Taylor  
CEO