

Thursday 21<sup>st</sup> May 2020

**To:** All Parents/Carers of pupils in Reach South Academy Trust schools

**Subject:** The planned further opening of our schools

Dear Parent/Carer,

You will be aware of the potential plan to further open schools on 1<sup>st</sup> June, subject to a number of Government tests being met. The Government have said that they will make a definitive decision on 28<sup>th</sup> May.

Since March, as a Trust we have ensured that all the children of critical workers 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. 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.

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 that our first priority is the safety of our pupils and our staff.

To do this, we have built the key principles into our planning. Over the past week, school leaders have been completing comprehensive risk assessments so that we can identify any issues and the actions required to address these. We have been looking very closely at all aspects of health and safety in these assessments and have also had advice from external risk management advisors to provide additional expertise. The information below describes our approach to a number of issues that are common across all our schools.

#### **Social distancing:**

- 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 will be organised to support social distancing; each child will have a 2m square home base that will be marked on floors along with circulation spaces. Each classroom will have a maximum limit that will not be exceeded.
- Pupils will have packed lunches that can be eaten in a defined space, usually the classroom.

#### **Health & Safety**

- Each school will operate strict procedures for maintaining hygiene levels and the use of the premises. Our new procedures along with other guidance can be found on our website [www.reachsouth.org/covid-19](http://www.reachsouth.org/covid-19)
- Each school will have appropriate PPE for specified activities. We do not encourage staff or pupils to wear PPE during normal lessons.

### **Pupils & staff with Symptoms**

- Children and adults with any potential symptoms of Covid-19: fever, cough or loss of taste and smell, will not be allowed to enter the building. Anyone developing any one of these symptoms while in the building will immediately be isolated until they can safely travel home.
- Staff or children developing symptoms must self-isolate for 7-days or until tested and confirmed negative. If tested positive, the individual of course must self-isolate under NHS

England guidance. Where a child or member of staff test positive the children and staff in that class 'bubble' will all be sent home and asked to self-isolate for 14-days. The Trust will also immediately consult with the public health authorities for further guidance.

- The Trust will book a test for any member of staff who has developed symptoms. Parents will need to book a test for their children.

### **Next steps:**

- Every school's completed risk assessment will be reviewed by the Headteacher, the Director of the Learning Environment, and myself on behalf of the Trust. When we are fully satisfied that all necessary control measures are in place, the school will be certified for opening.
- If the Government decides on 28<sup>th</sup> May that it is safe to open to a wider group of pupils, we will hold staff training days on 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> June for all staff, to prepare them for our new procedures. Each school will then admit the additional pupils from 3<sup>rd</sup> June, in a staggered manner. We hope to be able to admit reception class children on 3<sup>rd</sup> June followed by the other children on 8<sup>th</sup> June.
- Many of our schools will not have enough space to accommodate all pupils in nursery, reception, year-1 and year-6. We will give priority to the children of key workers, children with an assigned social worker and children with an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) followed by children in reception, year-1, nursery and year-6.
- Each school will ask you to book a space for your child if they are in one of the priority groups set out by the Government. If you are not offered a place, your child will continue to be supported through virtual learning.

I would like to reassure you that we are following all guidance from the DfE and Public Health England, as well as taking additional precautions, to reduce the risk of infection. Despite all of our best endeavours it is impossible for any school to guarantee that we will not be affected by the virus. As a parent or carer, you will want to decide whether you are happy for your child to return to school, if places are available. I recognise that this is a difficult decision for you to make, as you consider what is best for your child. More details will follow from each individual school in the coming days.

With best wishes



Dean Ashton  
CEO Reach South Academy Trust