

11 June 2020

Dear Parent/Carer

On behalf of all school staff, Trustees and governors, continued thanks for all your hard work, perseverance and support through these difficult times. We do appreciate the challenges the pandemic gives you and we do have empathy and understanding that these times are hard and far from ideal for families.

You will have seen the statement from Boris Johnson about schools not opening further to other year groups. We thought we would get more clarity from the Department for Education after his announcement but this has not been forthcoming.

From 1st June we extended the opening of our Trust Primary schools as directed by our government following a thorough risk assessment process. This has gone smoothly and I can report that pupils, parents and staff are happy and settled in their new routines.

However, the position we now find in most of our Trust **Primary** schools is that they are either close to capacity or indeed at capacity. Capacity is, with regard to keyworker and vulnerable children as well as children in the government's priority focus years which are Nursery, Reception, Years 1 and 6. Some parents of children in these groups or year groups are approaching schools to see if spaces are available. The response I need to prepare you to receive is likely to be "no".

I am sorry but once one of our schools is at capacity, with no space or staff to create more bubbles safely we have to say the school is full. This is the same message parents/carers are hearing from schools all over the country. It is an answer no school wants to give but we have to maintain the health and safety of all staff and children. Unless rules change we are therefore not currently going to open for other year groups. I know you will understand.

With regard to high schools even less information is coming from central government or the DfE. Our 3 high schools are re-opening on Monday for students in Years 10 and 12 joining vulnerable students as well as keyworker students who have been in schools since lockdown. There are currently no government plans for wider opening in high schools.

Giving the message that, as it stands now, our schools are unlikely to open further to other year groups is not a message I want to give. However, every school will continue to support you as parents and carers as well your child/children. Should anything change you will of course be updated.

What Boris Johnson's vision of a summer catch up programme, that extends into the autumn term entails and looks like, we do not know. We await, like you, further information.

With regard to transitions, we continue to work on these. Transition in these difficult times will look different this year. However, plans are being made to ensure the best transition is provided for all pupils during these restrictive times.

Furthermore, we do not know what schools will look like come September, and we cannot second guess. We are making plans but as these are subject to change we will share them with you once we know more.

I hope this offers some reassurance. I would love to receive greater clarity from Central Government in order to be able to give you greater clarity as well. Hopefully, this will be the case in the coming weeks. I will keep you updated.

Finally, I would like to personally thank all school staff in our 11 schools as well as Central Services staff. They have had to, like you, deal with really challenging times. Staff have given up holidays both at Easter and half term to keep our schools open. They are working long hours in order to give our children the best education, support and guidance they can. The stakes are high as we all want to ensure the safety and well being of all children. They do deserve great thanks and appreciation.

Again, thank you for your continued support and understanding; it is much appreciated.

Yours sincerely

Daniel Thrower
CEO, The Wensum Trust