

15 May 2020

Dear Parent/Carer

I would like to once again, give you my heartfelt thanks for all of your understanding, help and support in these extraordinary times. All the Trust staff and I, know just how hard this has been and we are striving at all times to offer you support, reassurance and appreciation. Thank you.

As you know the ambition of the government is that schools will reopen for children in Nursery, Reception, Year 1 and Year 6 on the 1st June. Vulnerable children and children of keyworkers already attending schools will still have provision provided for them. All of our primary schools have been working on government guidelines and rigorous Trust/Local Authority risk assessments to ensure that when our schools reopen we can keep your children and staff safe and as far as is feasibly possible (especially with young children), keep them socially distanced.

For young children the DfE have stated: *“Unlike older children, early years and Primary aged children cannot be expected to remain 2 metres apart from each other and staff”*. The way they expect schools to mitigate infection risk is that: *“Young people and staff where possible, only mix in a small consistent group and that small groups stay away from people and groups”*. I feel you should know in a very open and transparent way what the DfE expectations are. Through knowing this and indeed what we will be doing, you can make an informed choice as to whether your child will be returning to school on the 1st June.

With the DfE expectations in mind, we have decided to introduce the concept of children being in protective 'bubbles'. Each 'bubble' will be made up of approximately 8 to 15 children with constant and consistent members of staff, offering children the security that everyone keeps within their own 'bubble'. The 'bubble' will be based within the same room in school every day. In doing this, your child will feel safe and secure. If children need to move around school, they will move within their 'bubble' and they will come into school and exit school within their 'bubble' too. We don't want a 'bubble' to 'burst', so one would hope this new sense of belonging will bring a lot of comfort. We hope that you as parents/carers will feel reassured by this too and that teaching staff will work hard to ensure where possible, that every child has familiar children and members of staff in their 'bubble'. I hope this helps.

Through completing our risk assessments, we have to make it clear that not all of our schools will be able to offer school places 5 days a week for all children. Some will, but I need to make it clear, in order to keep children and staff safe we need to be stringent with our provision. This is because some of our classroom bases cannot accommodate 15 children as the space is too small to ensure that hygiene and social distancing is not compromised. What your school can offer will be communicated to you by your school as soon as they can. It will be influenced by the uptake there is from parents to send their children back. [This link](#) will take you to a questionnaire that, can I request all parents/carers of children only in Reception, Year 1 and Year 6 complete? We need this to be completed by Monday 18th May. Parents of nursery children you will receive a separate email from your school explaining what can be offered and what you need to do.

For children with specific needs, we are expected to complete a Child Specific Risk Assessment to ensure the child, other children and staff remain safe. These risk assessments will be shared with staff and parents and we will be required to review specific arrangements to mitigate all risks. This may unfortunately mean for some children that the safest option, is to remain at home.

I know many of you will be concerned about sending your child to school. At the same time, have the added pressure of work or returning to work. Whatever decision you make, will be personal to your circumstances and your assessment of what you feel is right for you and your child/children. I want to reassure you that parents/carers will not be fined for non-attendance at this time and schools will not be held to account for attendance. Again, I hope this helps.

With regard to High schools there will be a further communication as soon as we have greater clarity re the DfE's expectations. Likewise, there will also be further communications if the government decides to open schools up for other year groups.

Given we are living in ever changing times, changes could be made by government even to their current published plans. The uncertainty is stressful for us all. We will keep you updated.

Be rest assured that even though these different measures will be in place in our schools when children return, we will endeavour to make and keep our schools the nurturing, safe, happy, warm and welcoming places they have always been.

Thank you for your continued understanding and support.

Yours sincerely

Daniel Thrower
CEO, The Wensum Trust