

21 May 2020

Dear Parents and Carers,

I am writing to update you on our position regarding reopening the school following the Government's announcement on the 10 May 2020.

There is on-going debate as to how schools can offer some sort of education whilst still trying to keep safety at the forefront for both pupils and staff. Where mainstream schools have been asked to begin with specific year groups, special schools have not.

Government advice for our sector is:

'Special schools, special post-16 institutions and hospital schools should work towards welcoming back as many children and young people as can be safely catered for in their setting. They may want to prioritise attendance based on key transitions and the impact on life chances and development, and to consider creating part-time attendance rotas so that as many children as possible can benefit from attending their setting. Special settings should work with local authorities and families to ensure that decisions about attendance are informed by existing risk assessments for their children and young people, which should be kept up to date.' (DfE 12.5.20)

We are currently in the process of undertaking individual student risk assessments as well as detailed risk assessments of the school and staffing levels in accordance with Department for Education and Local Authority advice in order to determine what we can offer.

Key points that need to be considered are:

- The safest place for your child or young adult continues to be at home unless it is risk assessed that a child/young adult would be as safe or safer in school
- Children and young adults or those they live with who are in the clinically vulnerable or extremely clinically vulnerable group should remain at home, as this is the safest option
- Our individual student risk assessments will determine whether we can accommodate each student with an acceptable reduction of risk
- We will only be able to safely accept a limited number of pupils at any given time. Start and end times will need to be staggered and all timetables will be on a part time basis. We will not be able to offer a 'normal' timetable for any pupils
- A whole school risk assessment will determine how many staff and pupils can safely be in a room
- Pupils may be with a different group or class base as we increase numbers very slowly
- Pupils may have a different class teacher or support staff (we have many staff who are shielding or need to work from home for various reasons)
- Pupils at school will follow the same type of learning as those at home and we will have to significantly reduce resources available to prevent the spread of the virus
- Play areas and equipment will be limited to reduce infection spread. Soft play and the sensory rooms will be out of bounds as it would be impossible to maintain the required level of cleanliness and hygiene in these areas

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- The school will be separated into zones to limit movement and contact with other groups. If pupils are in school over the lunch break, they will eat in their classroom
- If any pupil is displaying behaviours that puts staff or other pupils at risk e.g. biting, spitting, scratching they may need to be sent home. This will form part of their risk assessment
- If any student is suspected of displaying symptoms, they will be isolated, and parents called. They must be collected from school immediately

Please note that at this point our next steps could be affected by infection levels in the population and any resulting government guidance.

It is important to note that:

- We do not yet know what transport arrangements would be
- We cannot guarantee that other pupils will always keep a social distance from your child or young adult. Most of our pupils are unable to understand or comply with social distancing and are naturally social and gravitate towards each other and staff
- Currently, we have no information regarding COVID-19 testing for staff or pupils at school
- We cannot eliminate the possibility that your child or young adult may be exposed to the virus at school

The current government guidelines do not require your child/young adult to return to school and we fully understand if you do not wish to take up any offer that you may be given. You will not be fined if you choose not to send your child or young adult back to school. If you decide to keep your child or young adult at home, we shall continue to provide home learning for them and as much communication and support as possible with any changes to the current model. If you do wish to send your child into school and we can safely accommodate their needs, then we will continue to provide the best educational support we can.

We will discuss the risk assessments with the local authority and our view of whether we can offer a level of safety that is acceptable to parents/carers and staff.

We will then provide you with more information about the offer that we are able to make, considering the numbers of pupils and staff as well as the space available.

We miss our whole school community immensely and we all want our pupils back in school, but only when we are sure it is as safe as it can be to do so.

If you have any further questions, please feel free to contact the school

With very best wishes to you all.

Yours faithfully,

Antony Clements
Interim Headteacher