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Date: 15<sup>th</sup> July 2020

Dear Parents/Carers

### **Guidance for full opening from 7<sup>th</sup> September 2020**

Since I last wrote to you, the government have published guidance on schools reopening full-time for all pupils from the beginning of the autumn term.

The Senior Leadership Team and Governors have spent time scrutinising the guidance, and I have summarised the key messages and directives below.

- The risk to children themselves of becoming severely ill from coronavirus (COVID-19) is very low and there are negative health impacts of being out of school.
- In relation to working in schools, whilst it is not possible to ensure a totally risk-free environment, the Office of National Statistics analysis on coronavirus (COVID-19) related deaths linked to occupations suggest that staff in educational settings tend not to be at any greater risk from the disease than many other occupations. There is no evidence that children transmit the disease any more than adults.
- Given the improved position, the balance of risk is now overwhelmingly in favour of children returning to school.
- Every school will also need to plan for the possibility of a local lockdown and how they will ensure continuity of education.
- Schools should not put in place rotas.

The guidance goes on to set out the public health advice schools must follow to minimise the risks of coronavirus (COVID-19) transmission. We have subsequently updated our whole school risk assessment, to ensure our environments are safer for children and staff, and that the risk of transmission of infection is substantially reduced.

The system of controls (protective measures) are a set of actions that schools must take. These are grouped into “prevention” and “response to any infection” with the key messages outlined below:

- minimise contact with individuals who are unwell by ensuring that those who have coronavirus (COVID-19) symptoms, or who have someone in their household who does, do not attend school.
- clean hands thoroughly more often than usual.
- introduce enhanced cleaning, including cleaning frequently touched surfaces often, using standard products such as detergents and bleach.
- minimise contact between individuals and maintain social distancing wherever possible.

- Public Health England is clear that routinely taking the temperature of pupils is not recommended as this is an unreliable method for identifying coronavirus (COVID-19).
- Public Health England does not (based on current evidence) recommend the use of face coverings in schools. This evidence will be kept under review.
- different groups don't need to be allocated their own toilet blocks, but toilets will need to be cleaned regularly and pupils must be encouraged to clean their hands thoroughly after using the toilet.

Another key change since the partial reopening of schools is of the make-up of "bubbles". Government guidance to Special Schools and Alternative Provisions (APs) is '*Due to the smaller size of many AP settings, and because APs are not typically organised by year groups, APs may wish to adopt whole school bubbles as part of their system of control and in order to best meet the needs of their students*'. We will therefore be organising our Centres as bubbles. We believe that this reduces logistical constraints and will allow us to continue the delivery of a broad and balanced curriculum taught by subject specific teachers.

### Transport

The governments approach to dedicated transport is that

- Pupils on dedicated school services do not mix with the general public on those journeys and tend to be consistent. The 2m rule applied to public transport will not apply from the autumn term on dedicated transport.

For pupils who use wider public transport, the guidance is that

- Public transport use by pupils, particularly in peak times, should be kept to an **absolute minimum**.
- Schools should work with partners to consider staggered start times to enable more journeys to take place outside of peak hours. It is recognised that this option will be more feasible in some circumstances than others.

If your child accesses public transport to school, please contact your child's Centre to discuss this further.

### Attendance

From the beginning of the autumn term, the usual rules on school attendance will therefore apply, including:

- Parents/Carers have a duty to ensure that their child attends school. Children of compulsory school age must be in school unless a statutory reason applies (for example, the pupil has been granted a leave of absence, is unable to attend because of sickness, is absent for a necessary religious observance etc.).
- Schools must record attendance and follow up absences as normal.
- Schools having the availability to issue sanctions, including fixed penalty notices in line with their local authorities' codes of conduct.

We are keen to adhere to government guidance and want all pupils and staff to be back in school from September, as we believe the conditions are right for this, but acknowledge that some families will understandably have worries that we are keen to hear and address together. Please continue to communicate any concerns you have about your child returning to school with your child's key worker or Centre Leader.

Centre staff have also identified pupils who they know might be particularly reluctant or anxious about returning to school who will be contacted during the summer break and will be offered Centre visits as well as home visits and other interventions to support their return to school.

Finally, we all acknowledge that there are huge benefits to young people being online in order to stay connected to family and friends during this period, the government also recognises that many parents may feel concerned about the activities and content their children are accessing. They have therefore produced some guidance which outlines resources to help keep children safe from different risks online and where to go to receive support and advice. Please see the guidance here

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-keeping-children-safe-online>

Thank you for your continued support. I wish you all a restful and enjoyable summer and look forward to welcoming all pupils back on Monday 7<sup>th</sup> September.

Yours faithfully



**Tosin Gabriel**  
**Vice Principal – Head of Parkway, Northfield and Dovedale Centres**