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Jane Cook
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13th May 2020

Dear Parent/Carer

Whilst the past months have been difficult, I would like to thank you all for your patience and understanding. I am immensely proud of the staff in our academies who have ensured there is a place for all vulnerable children and children of critical workers. I am also proud of our children and their families; this is not easy for any of us.

Following the Prime Minister's announcement on Sunday 10 May and the subsequent information published by the government I wanted to write to you to share my views on what we know so far.

It is clear that the Government is being very cautious in the way in which it is approaching the removal of the lockdown process to avoid a second spike. I spoke with the Department for Education yesterday morning and with all Headteachers in our trust in the afternoon, from these conversations and from the information published so far there are still many questions about how this process will be managed in our academies.

In the guidance issued, the Government is asking primary schools to welcome back children in nursery, reception, year 1 and year 6 alongside priority groups from 1 June 2020. The Government is also asking secondary schools to offer some face to face support to supplement the remote education of year 10 students who are due to take key exams next year, alongside the provision they are offering to priority groups.

Some further clarification about what this might mean has now been received from the Government, but many questions remain.

While we will be setting some minimum expectations and guiding principles for decision making, we will be supporting our academy leaders and giving them the flexibility to decide how best to deliver the Government's ambition slowly, carefully and safely based on advice and their local context.

In order for us to start to open our doors to more children we will need clear guidance to plan how it is possible to keep our children, staff and families safe. It is clear that life at school will not be the same. Children will not be able to socialise freely at breaktimes, they will not be able to move around the classroom as they did previously, and our classrooms will look and feel very different.

You will be aware from the media that there are many factors which need to be considered. These include how parents get to school safely at the start and end of the day whilst maintaining social distancing rules, how the children are dropped off and collected, how we will provide our school lunches and hot dinners, how our children will maintain social distancing rules and how we can keep our staff safe. These are some of the many questions which I have already started to look at to help formulate our plan for reopening our academies. Please be assured that we are doing everything we can in an effort to be prepared to open our academies to a wider group of children when it is considered safe to do so for everyone. While we are in unprecedented times, I am confident about what the future holds and we are all looking forward to the day when we can welcome you and your children back to their academy.

Until then, our prayers and best wishes are with you and your families.

Yours faithfully,

Michael Cowland
Chief Executive Officer



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