

20 May 2020



DIOCESE OF SOUTHWELL
& NOTTINGHAM

MULTI ACADEMY TRUST

Parents and carers,

When I wrote to you last week, I indicated that I would write again with an update when I could. Things have moved on quite significantly and I am now in a position to share the way that partner academies within SNMAT are planning to move forward. Things do, however, continue to be uncertain and – as such – our plans may also change in step with the government's guidance.

- The government is making a decision on **Thursday, 28 May** about the re-opening of schools in England. At present, the earliest that this will be is during the week beginning 01 June. You will be hearing a great deal about this in the press and other media; much of this speculation - please be assured that we will communicate with you when we have a confirmation of the way forward.
- All SNMAT partner academies are actively planning to begin re-opening to more children.
- We will continue to prioritise the children of critical workers and vulnerable pupils.
- This is very new territory and, because of this, we want to know that our plans are effective before we move forward quickly. We will therefore trial our processes with limited numbers of pupils at first. When we know our strategies are working, we will look to re-open for more children. Your headteacher will be in contact to provide details and likely dates.
- All academies and schools are likely to be offering different approaches to re-opening. This is because re-opening is completely dependent on the number of staff that are available to work. As with every other walk of life, there are members of staff in academies who have underlying health conditions, are shielding loved ones or have been advised to stay at home. In some academies the impact of this is limited; in others it has significantly reduced the numbers of staff who are available.
- It has been suggested that supply teachers are used where staffing levels are very low. We have considered this and decided that, given the amount of time that most children have been away from the academy, introducing unfamiliar faces at the point of return would not be helpful. It would also increase the number of interactions between children and staff and therefore raise the level of risk. We have consequently decided not to pursue this as an option.
- The planning that headteachers are involved in at the moment will mean that academies are very different places. Children will be in small groups that do not interact with others, and have the same staff every time they are in the academy. These are called 'bubbles' and will help children, staff and the community to reduce the risk of infection and transmission.

- Many parents have already signalled that they do not want their children to return if we re-open in early June. I repeat the message that parents will not be penalised for this. If you have made such a choice and change your mind at a later stage, please be patient with the academy; it may take a number of days for the academy to make changes to accommodate more children. In some cases, where staffing levels are already at full capacity, it may not be possible for more children to attend until more staff are available. I know that you will understand that, if this is the case, children will be welcomed back as soon as they safely can be.
- Please be assured that all SNMAT partner academies are receiving advice and guidance from our Health and Safety advisors. This is the same team that are advising the majority of schools across Nottinghamshire. We will be carrying out risk assessments in every academy and following the guidance closely.
- In order to keep the remote/online learning working for those year groups that have not been identified by the government for a planned return to school, it is very likely that partner academies will be closed to all except critical worker's children and vulnerable children for up to a day each week. This will also allow for more extensive cleaning of the areas being used.

I recognise that this is a great deal of information, and that it is likely that headteachers have also been keeping you up to date. At SNMAT, we are all very much looking forward to returning to some form of normality as soon as it is safe to do so; this will remain our key priority as we move into the next phase of this situation.

Please look after yourselves and your loved ones.



Chris Moodie
Chief Executive Officer, SNMAT