

Reach South Academy Trust
c/o UTC Plymouth
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Telephone: 01752 284257
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2nd April 2020

To: All employees of Reach South Academy Trust
Subject: COVID-19 2019-nCoV, Coronavirus

Dear Colleagues,

We are now well into the second week of our response to the Coronavirus pandemic. Our EduCare settings continue to be available for the children of Covid-19 key workers and vulnerable children. Across the Trust we are receiving only around 1.4% of our normal pupil numbers. This varies from academy to academy with around 3% of normal pupil numbers in our Bournemouth schools and lower numbers in our Wiltshire and Plymouth schools.

The Trust and individual academies have received a number of thank you messages from key-worker parents for all that you are doing to not only keep their children safe in EduCare, but also engaged, stimulated, and reassured, as well as learning and enjoying themselves. Can I also thank you all for making this vital service possible, whatever your role in its delivery.

The number one priority for the Trust is to protect our pupils and staff. It is essential that we manage our EduCare settings to minimise the risk of infection being brought into the setting, and being spread within the setting if it is brought in.

Our principles to achieve this are:

1. The numbers of adults and children in the setting each day will be kept to a minimum.
2. The school leader running the setting each week has the authority to refuse admission to any adult or child, that they have a reasonable concern, would present an infection risk to the setting.
3. Where EduCare settings are combined, due to very low numbers attending, the decision to combine will only be made after ensuring that numbers of children and adults in the combined setting will still be at a safe level to reduce the risk of infection spread.
4. School leaders will only use the minimum number of staff from the rota team to safely operate the EduCare provision. That means we need enough staff on site with the necessary expertise but no more than is necessary.
5. Staff members not required to be in the EduCare setting are not permitted to come onto the site. We have to protect those staff and children that have to be on-site. If a staff member believes that they have an essential reason to access the site, then this must be discussed with your school leader in advance. Access will only be permitted in the most exceptional of circumstances.
6. An 'EduCare' Estates Management policy and procedure was issued this week and can be viewed on the Trust's web-site <https://www.reachsouth.org/covid-19> The purpose of this policy is to ensure that the management of our buildings provides as safe an environment for our EduCare children and staff as is possible.

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I am pleased to announce that currently 67% of us are well and able to work in schools to deliver EduCare when required. A further 20% of us are well but either homeworking or in self-isolation due to having a recognised vulnerability to Covid-19. So together, 87% of us are well and working. The remaining 13% of us are not well, either with an illness not related to coronavirus or in isolation due to having coronavirus type symptoms. For those of you in this group, I hope you all feel well again soon.

I recognise that this is a very stressful time for all of us, both personally and professionally. To support all of our staff we have invested in an Employee Assistance Programme (EAP). The EAP is provided by Health Assured. You should all have received a personal e-mail from our Director of HR, Olivia Frings, providing you with a password to access the EAP through the Reach South web-site <https://www.reachsouth.org/eap>

The EAP provides a completely confidential service for all of us and our immediately family members, including unlimited access to counselling for emotional problems; legal information; bereavement support; and medical information. Please have a look through the information on the website.

Having now got EduCare in place and working, our focus has started to shift to our virtual school provision, to support the ongoing learning of the 98.6% of our pupils who are working from home. I have been so impressed with the home-learning arrangements that are in place across our academies and the creative and enthusiastic way that so many of you are making home learning both educative and fun. We need to make this work for all of our pupils whether they have access to technology or not. We need to make sure there is a consistent quality of provision for all children and a sharing of best practice. There is an opportunity here for us all to work together across the Trust; school geographical boundaries are meaningless for our virtual schools, and I will say more about this in a future communication.

Safeguarding and protecting all children is at the heart of our role as educators. Virtual schooling and EduCare introduce new challenges for us in being effective in our safeguarding duties. This is particularly the case in virtual schooling where vulnerable children are less visible to us. We have been working on an appendix to our child protection policies to address the additional safeguarding challenges during the Covid-19 emergency period. We will be publishing the policy appendix template on the Reach South website before the weekend. Each academy will use the template, individualise it and publish it on the school websites. Please can you all make a point of familiarising yourself with the policy annex. If you have any questions about this, please will you direct them to your local Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) or Deputy DSL. On April 14th, our new Head of Safeguarding, Johanna Hughes johanna.hughes@reachsouth.org will begin her new role with us. Johanna is currently an Ofsted HMI specialising in safeguarding, and we look forward to her joining the Reach South team in a couple of weeks.

With very best wishes,



Dean Ashton

CEO Reach South Academy Trust