

Reach South Academy Trust
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25th March 2020

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

Dear Colleagues,

We are now in the third day of our new role as providers of EduCare. Providing care and education for the children of Covid-19 front-line workers and vulnerable children.

When the Secretary of State announced last Wednesday evening that we would have this new role, we did not know how many children were going to turn up at our schools. We were told to expect around 10% of the normal school population so we planned for 20%.

In fact, the numbers have been much lower than that. On Monday, we provided EduCare for around 5% of our normal pupil numbers and that has reduced to around **2%** on Tuesday and today. Some schools have had no children arrive. The number of children is clearly very manageable for us.

These numbers are far fewer than the number of families that we serve who have a key-worker parent. It is clear, that where key-workers can organise their own childcare arrangements, then they are. It is only key workers who are not able to make alternative arrangements who are asking us to care for their children.

While the numbers of children presenting for EduCare are small, the impact on those key-worker parents that bring their children to us, is huge. We are making it possible for those key-workers to continue the 24/7 fight against Coronavirus to protect all of us, all of our friends and families and all of our fellow citizens. Our contribution is vital to the national strategy to fight this virus and limit its impact until a vaccine is available.

The other unknown in our planning for this week was how many of us would be available to support this new role in our schools. Once we had asked some to work from home (because their jobs could be done there as effectively as in the workplace); once those that have to self-isolate because they are in one of the vulnerable categories defined by Public Health England, had done so; and having lost staff to temporary absences through illness or temporary self-isolation – we still had **75%** of our staff ready and willing to work in our schools today.

That is an amazing proportion of you and a testament to your professionalism and commitment to public duty during this period of national emergency. It is not just the numbers that matter here; I have received so many reports and communications from our staff about creative and inspirational approaches to delivering both learning in our EduCare settings and in our virtual classrooms for the other 98% of our children. I have received communications from many of you, in all professions within the Trust; wanting to know how you can step forward to do your bit over the traditional school holiday periods. I find your collective dedication to doing whatever is required both humbling and inspiring. Thank you all so much.

Over the next few weeks, we are re-organising ourselves to achieve the following imperatives:

- Provide virtual schooling for the 98% of our pupils that are learning at home.
- Provide EduCare for children of Covid-19 key workers and vulnerable children.
- Safeguard our vulnerable children regardless of whether they are on-site in EduCare or at home.

As I have said before, Covid-19 has no respect for holidays. Key-workers will be working just as hard to fight this infection during traditional holiday periods, as they will be on any other day. We will have to adjust our working practices to reflect this. On the other hand, this battle is likely to be a marathon lasting some months, not a sprint lasting a few days. We need to pace ourselves and take time to recharge our batteries.

In our EduCare settings we need to organise ourselves in ways that minimise the risk of spreading the infection. To achieve this, we will now reorganise on the following principles:

- Easter holidays and half term (including bank holidays) no longer apply.
- Homeworking staff, who have to self-isolate because they are in one of the vulnerable groups, or have been identified operationally as being able to home work, will work a three-week rota pattern, in which they will be entitled to three-days leave once every three weeks. This will allow those employees to receive around the same number of days of total leave, by the end of the summer term, as if we had the normal Easter and half term holidays. The focus of work for these staff will be developing and supporting the running of our virtual schools for our pupils at home. Your academy leaders will coordinate that work and set the expectation on you.
- Staff fit and able to work in EduCare settings, including staff that are temporarily ill or temporarily self-isolating, will be assigned to one of three staff teams. Each team will:
 - Spend one week delivering EduCare in the setting;
 - Spend one week preparing and developing materials for the EduCare setting or virtual school at home;
 - Spend one week on emergency call but otherwise resting.
- The staff assigned to each EduCare team will not be mixed once assigned, to prevent cross contamination from one team to another; should a staff member contract the virus while working in the setting, the two weeks out of the setting will provide enough time for symptoms to show so that we do not send that person back into the setting until they have recovered.

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- Because each team works for a full week in the setting, the risk of an infected child passing the infection on to more than one staff team is minimised.
- Currently we have more staff available for the three EduCare teams in each setting than we need for the numbers of pupils attending. In order to reduce the risk of introducing the infection into our settings we only want the minimum number of staff in the settings necessary for their safe running. School leaders will split each team into sub-teams where this is the case and arrange those teams so that we all spend the least time having to come to the setting itself. This will be done equitably and reflect the individual circumstances of each setting.
- Where settings have very low numbers of children attending then groups of settings may be combined into a hub setting. The staff from all schools involved in the hub will be organised into the three teams.

Some of our support staff have been asked to home work. If this is the case and your current contract is for term-time only, then we may ask you to continue to work to your current contractual terms. Your Line Manager will explain this.

These arrangements will allow us to: meet our new responsibilities; continue to make our significant contribution to fighting this virus and saving lives; minimise the risk of any of us or our pupils catching the virus in our settings; and still get the necessary rest time so that we can keep up our efforts over the coming months. School Leaders and Line Managers will explain how these arrangements will affect you in more detail.

Thank you all again for your outstanding contribution. Please do make sure you look after yourselves too.

With very best wishes,



Dean Ashton

CEO Reach South Academy Trust