

5th June 2020

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

Dear Colleagues,

We have taken our first tentative steps this week in the wider opening of our primary academies for more children. Our EduCare numbers at the end of May were around 4.5% of our pre-Covid-19 normal school attendance. Today, our numbers are 10% of pre-Covid-19 attendance. This is about what we expected for the first step in our phased return. We anticipate numbers to increase on Monday as we take more children from the priority groups.

Before each academy was allowed to open for more children, a certificate for wider opening was signed by our Director of Learning Environment, the Headteacher and myself. That certificate is to confirm that our risk assessments and the necessary control measures identified in them had all been completed and the school had completed all of its preparations in line with the Trust's 'Estates Management for Academies Commencing Operation Beyond Providers of EduCare' and 'Personal Protective Equipment Guidance for Academies Commencing Operation Beyond Providers of EduCare 26 May 2020'. Both documents are available on our website at <https://www.reachsouth.org/covid-19>

The certificates for wider opening also set out the total capacity of the school (adults and children) and the maximum number of children that can be admitted. These numbers are calculated from the actual space available in our class bubbles while we maintain the strict 2m social distancing within them. No academy is permitted to exceed that number of children on site so that we can all be assured that the social distancing requirements will be maintained.

One consequence of that necessary limit is that many of our academies will not be able to take more than 30% of their pre-covid-19 full attendance numbers. Unfortunately, that is less than the total number of children that the Government has identified as being entitled to return to primary schools: i.e. children of key workers, vulnerable children, and children in nursery, reception, Year 1 and Year 6. This would amount to more than 50% of children normally in school. It is clear that if all parents wanted their children who are eligible to return, most of our schools simply could not accommodate them. I wrote to all parents on the 21st May to make them aware of this fact.

The Trust has issued oversubscription criteria that each Headteacher will apply if the demand for places for pupils exceeds the capacity set out on the certificate for wider

opening. Children who are not successful in securing a place will continue to receive support for home learning. This will be frustrating and disappointing for some families and I wish we could support them all, but the physical size of our classrooms limits the number of pupils that we can safely accommodate during the on-going pandemic.

I also want to draw your attention to the fact that on 31st May, the Government added chronic mild and moderate asthma to the list of conditions that constitute clinical vulnerability to Covid-19. Individuals in this group are advised to strictly social distance, stay at home as much as possible and take extra care when going outside. This will affect around 1-in-11 children and 1-in-12 adults who are receiving treatment for asthma in England. If you are in this group and you are concerned about being able to strictly socially distance at work, please contact HR or your Headteacher. The Trust will support you in making adjustments at work or supporting your working from home if appropriate. You will, as with other staff members in this group, be asked to provide evidence of your clinical vulnerability to be supported for home working.

The South West has enjoyed one of the lowest Covid-19 infection rates in the whole of the UK. For that reason, we feel that it has been safe to open our academies more widely for children. However, with increasing visitors to our region and the easing of social lockdown, there is a real risk of the infection rate increasing in our communities. For that reason, we must be extra vigilant in observing the infection controls, hygiene regimes and social distance guidance in our academies and our personal lives.

We will continue to monitor local infection rates and if they start to change in the areas served by our academies we will review the wider opening of our schools.

With very best wishes,



Dean Ashton

CEO Reach South Academy Trust