

10th July 2020

To: All LGB Chairs and Academy Principals

Dear Chairman and Principal,

The Reach South Academy Trust Board met on the 9th July and considered carefully the Government's proposals and guidance for the full re-opening of all schools in England from September. The Board has resolved that, subject to the completion of the necessary risk assessments and control measures being put in place, we expect fully to open all of our academies at the beginning of the Autumn Term. The Board also resolved that our Local Governing Bodies should now return to local governance, although it might be appropriate for the first meeting of the new academic year to be held via a virtual platform so that external visitors to school are minimised.

During the period between 20th March and 31st May, around 4% of our pupils attended the 'EduCare' provision in our academies. Since the wider opening of academies in June, around 20% of pupils have been in attendance, although this figure ranges from 8% to 30% across our different academies.

We are now looking forward to having all of our pupils back in school in September. We know that it will not be back to normal, however. The Coronavirus pandemic continues and we will have to operate our academies in new ways to minimise the risk of infection spread. These new ways include both strict hygiene controls and the organisation of pupils and staff into 'bubbles' that are managed so that they have minimal contact with other 'bubbles'. The Trust is updating its 'Estates Management for Academies Operating from September 1st' which sets out the processes that each academy must follow to reduce the risk of infection spread. This guidance fully complies with the DfE and Public Health England (PHE) guidance for schools. All of the Trust's guidance in respect of Covid-19 is published on our website at <https://www.reachsouth.org/covid-19>

The other significant difference in September will be the impact on the majority of our pupils of being out of school for almost six months. Although we have had a comprehensive 'virtual schooling' offer for children that have been home learning, there will have been variability of pupil's circumstances that help them to engage with the virtual learning and benefit from it. Children will return in September with a wide range of readiness to engage in learning again. The Trust is working with our school leaders to make sure that our curriculum in September is able to support the individual needs of pupils and helps them transition back to normal learning. This process may take several months.

Despite our best endeavours, with the virus still in circulation, we also need to be ready to respond to infection increases locally and nationally. This may include the partial or full closures of schools for a period of time. Our senior teams are in close communications with the relevant Local Authorities. The Trust will collaborate closely with the relevant public health bodies where local infection spikes occur or an infection is confirmed within one of our academies. We have the contingency plans in place to support all of our academies if these circumstances prevail.

In the second half of August we will review our decision for full opening to take account of any changes to the Government's guidance at that time. I very much hope, however, that we will see our schools fully open again and all of our pupils being supported once more in the joy of learning.

Whilst you are not expected to continue any monitoring work for the rest of July we would hope that you will utilise the excellent online training we provide through our Governance Lead. There are 15 courses to complete - most taking no longer than 20 minutes. This is a perfect way of upskilling before September.

With kind regards,



Chairman
Reach South Academy Trust