

19th May 2020

Dear colleague

Easing the lockdown in schools across York

You will be all too aware of the national debate of the decision to reopen schools to more children gradually, as long as key safety criteria are met. Since the prime minister's announcement, there has been a lot of government guidance and schools across the country are working to see how the intention to open school more widely might be achieved.

In York, all schools and academies have been meeting online as the York Schools and Academies Board regularly to formulate our response collectively, in the interests of everyone in our school communities. We want to make it clear that we will only open our schools to more pupils if we are satisfied the risks have been minimised according to government guidance. **The health and safety of staff and pupils is the guiding principle in every decision we make.**

Our initial plans – subject to the government's key criteria being met – are that all primary schools will be closed on Monday 1 June (other than for those children currently accessing schools) in order for all settings to be thoroughly organised, safe and ready for what will be a quite different experience of school for our pupils. When places are provided for more children, these are likely to be on a part-time basis. Due to children attending in small groups, all schools (other than for key worker children, vulnerable and EHCP) anticipate they are likely to be closed, initially for up to a day a week, in order to carry out ongoing preparatory work and a deep clean.

As Trust Principal, I take great pride in the professionalism, commitment and resilience of our staff at every level, doing the best we can for our children's education and wellbeing in the most extraordinary of circumstances. We are also playing an important role in helping the NHS respond to the biggest public health crisis in our lifetimes.

Looking ahead, we will continue to prioritise, above all others, those children who are still coming to school. We are working to explore ways where, if conditions allow, we can reintroduce children to school gradually, in a phased way. We want to begin with Nursery classes, followed by Reception, then Year 1 and finally Year 6. However, I want to emphasise these measures will be taken extremely cautiously, year group by year group, and only when we are confident to do so.

At the same time, we need to acknowledge that available capacity in our school will dictate the pace at which the wider reopening of our school can happen; it is important to emphasise that, in order to maintain satisfactory distancing, there will be limits to the number of children who can attend.

I am truly grateful for your dedication to our profession and all that we stand for – thank you. With that appreciation comes a commitment that we recognise each individual effort being made and it is our duty to minimise risk and only move forwards with a wider opening for our school when we are confident it is safe to do so.

I attach an information sheet we are issuing to parents which I hope will be helpful and I will continue to keep you informed of progress as this situation continues to unfold.

With warmest best wishes,

Yours faithfully



Jo Edwards
Trust Principal