



**25<sup>th</sup> February 2021**

**Re: Re-opening of Schools on the 8<sup>th</sup> March 2021**

Dear Parents/Carers

I am sure you will have heard the news on Monday that all schools will be re-opening on the 8<sup>th</sup> of March. This is a positive step, and I am delighted to be opening all Trust schools again to our children.

We have now had time to read through the guidance in full and digest the information provided to us. I would like to reassure you that the safety of our school communities remains to be at the forefront of all of our decisions. Many of the measures put into place in our schools before Christmas will continue and relevant adjustments will be made to our school risk assessments in line with the latest Government advice.

You will receive information from your individual schools over the coming days to confirm specific arrangements which apply to you and your child(ren), however I would like to take this opportunity to highlight some key points from the latest guidance:

**Rapid Testing**

Lateral flow testing for our school staff remains a vital part of the plan to identify any non-symptomatic carriers and suppress the spread of the virus in our school communities. Staff who have chosen to opt into rapid testing are carrying out twice-weekly lateral flow tests from home.

**School Attendance**

School attendance will be mandatory for all children from 8th March.  
The usual rules on school attendance apply, including:

- parents' duty to secure their child's regular attendance at school (where the child is a registered child (ren) at school and they are of compulsory school age)
- the ability to issue sanctions, including fixed penalty notices in line with local authorities' codes of conduct

## **Drop-off and Collection Times**

School start and finish times may be staggered to help to keep groups apart as they arrive and leave. Staggered start and finish times will not reduce the amount of overall teaching time.

You will receive detailed communication from your schools confirming the arrangements which apply to you, however the following rules will apply in all of our schools to ensure maximum safety:

At drop off and collection times, please do not:

- gather at the school gates
- come onto the site without an appointment

## **Face Coverings**

Face coverings (masks), should be worn by staff and adult visitors in school where social distancing between adults is not possible. Visors should not be worn as an alternative to masks, however can be worn as an additional measure.

Masks will be worn by staff on the school gates at the beginning and end of the school day.

Safe wearing of face coverings requires the:

- cleaning of hands before and after touching – including to remove or put them on
- safe storage of them in individual, sealable plastic bags between use

## **Minimising Contact Between People**

Year group bubbles will be re-introduced in school to ensure as much distance as possible can be maintained between individuals.

Your schools will provide further information on how bubbles have been organised. In the event of any bubble closures, schools will continue to work closely with Public Health England and Local Authority Advisors before taking action and will update all staff and parents affected by such closures as soon as they happen.

## **Remote Education**

In the event of a bubble closure or children self-isolating at home, remote learning will be provided.

## **Reminder - What to do if you Have Symptoms of Covid-19**

Children, staff and other adults must not come into the school if:

- they have one or more coronavirus (COVID-19) symptoms:
  - a high temperature
  - a new continuous cough
  - a loss or change to your sense of smell or taste

- a member of their household (including someone in their support bubble or childcare bubble if they have one) has coronavirus (COVID-19) symptoms.
- they are required to quarantine having recently visited countries outside the Common Travel Area
- they have had a positive test result

They must immediately cease to attend and not attend for at least 10 days from the day after:

- the start of their symptoms
- the test date if they did not have any symptoms but have had a positive test (whether this was a Lateral Flow Device (LFD) or Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR) test)

## **System of Controls – Response to any Infection**

### NHS Test and Trace process

Staff members, parents and carers will need to:

- book a test if they or their child has symptoms
- provide details of anyone they have been in close contact with, if they test positive for coronavirus (COVID-19) or if asked by NHS Test and Trace

Please see the link below for further information:

[Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): getting tested - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-getting-tested)

## **Washing Hands**

Staff, children and visitors in school are encouraged to wash their hands more regularly.

For children:

- when they arrive at the school
- when they return from breaks
- when they change rooms
- before and after eating

## **Travelling to School**

Children and staff may use public transport where necessary, but are encouraged to walk, cycle or scoot to and from school wherever it is possible and safe to do so. Where children and staff need to use public transport, they should follow the safer travel guidance for passengers:

[Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): safer travel guidance for passengers - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-safer-travel-guidance-for-passengers)

## **Clinically Extremely Vulnerable Children**

The current Government advice for children who have been confirmed as clinically extremely vulnerable (CEV) is to shield and stay at home as much as possible until further notice.

These children are advised not to attend school while shielding advice applies nationally.

If you haven't already done so, you may be asked to supply a copy of the shielding letter sent to CEV children, to confirm that they are advised not to attend school whilst shielding guidance is in place.

## **Support for Children**

It is completely understandable that both parents and children may have concerns or are feeling anxious about the return to school. I would like to reassure you that we have a number of support mechanisms in place to support our children and families with this transition. You will receive school-specific information over the coming days in relation to the measures in place and how you can access this support.

## **School Kitchens**

From 8<sup>th</sup> March, all of our school kitchens will be fully open and normal legal requirements will apply to the provision of food for children.

This includes for those eligible for:

- benefits-related free school meals
- universal infant free school meals

Free school meal support will continue to be provided to children who are eligible for benefits-related free school meals and who are learning at home during term time and arrangements for this will be confirmed by your school. For those in receipt of Edenred meal vouchers, these will cease from 8<sup>th</sup> March.

## **Educational Visits**

Government have advised against all educational visits at this time. This advice will be kept under review and we will ensure all parents/carers are updated with any changes.

## **Uniform**

All of our schools will maintain their usual uniform policies. Uniforms do not need to be cleaned:

- more often than usual
- using different methods

Thank you for the support and care you have shown to our schools and children during this challenging period, and we very much look forward to welcoming our children back on the 8<sup>th</sup> of March.

Yours sincerely



Amarjit Cheema OBE (CEO)