



15 May 2020

Dear Parents and Carers

Firstly, thank you for your hard work and dedication in ensuring that your child's education has continued at home to the best of your abilities, often in inspiring and creative forms, and for continuing to support our students in the Cheddar Valley during what have, and continue to be difficult times.

Following the Government's announcement, the Trust is dedicated to ensuring that our plan for a partial opening from 1 June 2020 is gradual, and most importantly, keeps our learners and staff safe. These are our two core priorities. The Trust continues to work collaboratively with Professional Associations to ensure that we are basing our plans on the most current, up to date information and guidance. This is enabling us to be assured in making the right decisions, giving us confidence for a failsafe plan.

The Trust's Executive Heads, Headteachers, Heads of School and Senior Leaders are all understanding of this situation and the anxiety that it undoubtedly brings. However, rest assured that as a family of staff we understand those concerns and that we are listening to you. The welfare of our learners, their families and our staff is key. I wish to reassure you that, whilst we are acutely conscious of the current situation, we have planned to mitigate against the risks we face. We will ensure our schools remain a controlled, safe environment.

The Trust has purchased stocks of sanitiser, disinfectant, face masks, gloves along with other equipment. All our schools will receive instructions on how these measures are to be put into practice, prior to reopening. Strict routines and protocols will be followed by our staff, to ensure that your children are safe and protected in their school environments.

Ensuring our learners are equipped with coping techniques will be a priority during this period. Our young people will have a network of people to talk to about their concerns and worries and will be provided with a resource bank of strategies to support them with their mental wellbeing and emotional welfare. Our staff will also benefit from workshop sessions, to ensure that they are equipped with the skills and strategies necessary to cope with this next stage, both for themselves and their learners.

It is essential for everyone's wellbeing, that our mind-set is focused on understanding that this gradual, partial reopening plan is focussed on:

1. Small, thought out, well assured steps
2. Establishing, step by step, routines and protocols
3. Understanding that the whole country is in the same position
4. A gradual process which will involve a rota of young people attending school. This is likely to mean that certain learners are in on some days and perhaps not others, as we limit class sizes and the number of young people in school
5. Understanding that each of our Trust schools is unique. Local solutions will be in place that best fit the needs of an individual school. Your Heads know your schools best and will be devising their plans on the understanding of the needs of your unique educational settings
6. Understanding that this gradual return will involve a completely different 'curriculum' to what teachers and young people are used to. We cannot be expected to continue with the 'normal' as this is far from a normal situation



As parents and carers, I wish to assure you that our Trust schools have all thought-through every eventuality of allowing a greater number of learners back into education. We are moving together as a Trust in a manner which will best keep your children and our staff protected.

Therefore, as we move into this next stage of education in the Covid-19 pandemic, please be mindful that schools will be operating in a different way from 'normal'.

The following Trust advice is likely to be implemented in your school upon this partial opening:

- You may be asked to send your child in with a packed lunch
- Breaks and lunch times will be staggered for different classes
- Break and lunch times may be shortened to minimise contact risk
- The school day may start later and finish earlier (we are talking to transport agencies about this possibility along with the safety protocols surrounding coach travel in this current situation)
- Learners will attend school in their own clothes so that they can be washed / changed regularly
- Classes will be split in half or thirds to form smaller learning groups
- Learners will keep to the same classroom and other people will not enter that classroom
- Learners will sit at the same desk, with desks distanced according to social distancing regulations
- Outdoor space is used, or considered for use, weather permitting, as part of the revised curriculum
- Outdoor equipment is not used unless it is thoroughly cleaned between users
- Strict hygiene protocols will be followed such as desks and door handles being disinfected regularly and wiped down, and bins will be emptied throughout the day
- Soft play equipment is removed
- One-way systems in school corridors may be implemented in 'high traffic' areas
- Where classrooms that can be accessed from 'outside' these entrances will be used to avoid walking through other areas of the school
- Toilets have a system that limit numbers at any one time
- Staff will strictly abide to social distancing guidelines, including a limited amount of staff allowed in the staff room / communal areas at any one time
- School receptions will allow for social distancing and will implement protective screening measures
- Parent drop-offs and pick-ups will be 'distanced', with only one parent/carer present. The Trust are looking at staggered timings, which for many schools where parents/carers do take their children to school would help, but this would not be possible for those who rely on coach transportation
- Communication 'systems' are implemented in each school to allow parents and carers to voice queries and concerns that they may have so that further action can be taken where necessary



The Trust are highly conscious that some families are shielding and will continue to shield for a number of reasons, including personal vulnerabilities and medical conditions. Please feel reassured that there are opportunities for you to have a confidential conversation with your school regarding your family and child's needs and concerns. In these situations, schools will be advised to seek a solution to fit the individual circumstance.

As a Trust, we will evaluate and review this situation as we move forwards. We will decide how and when we open to Pre-School, Reception and Year 1 children. We will only decide to open to more children when we are assured and confident that it is safe to do so. It will be the case that our schools will not be open on Monday the 1st June for all of the children that the government have said, as we will be phasing this plan. Many of our first/primary schools will be considering how we manage some of the older school buildings in terms of social distancing and pupil movement. I am sure you will agree that you will want us to ensure our schools are safe rather than rushing all our learners back at once. Your school will write to you in the next few days to outline their initial plan.

The Trust are conscious that transition years for our 'Three-Tier' system schools vary to those which have been published by Government. As a Trust we are planning a solution for Year 4, Year 6 and Year 8 pupils who will move schools by September. It is our opinion that we must let these young people have the rites of passage of saying farewell to their current schools. The Trust are also working diligently to form a plan for the education of Year 10 and Year 12 students to support them to prepare for their examination year. In addition, we are working hard to ensure that our Year 11 students continue with their education to enable them to begin their advanced study in the Sixth Form in September, fully prepared and equipped with the necessary knowledge and skills.

We are all part of the Wessex Learning Trust, and we will continue to support our learners, families and community, and ensure we do our best for the young people of the Cheddar Valley to make sure that they get the best start in life they can. The Trust Board will also be monitoring and evaluating this return to school through its Risk, Strategy and Audit committee and will be working with local Governors to ensure the safety of our young people, our staff and our parents/carers.

We will continue to learn together, thrive together, and stay safe together.

Kind regards

Gavin Ball
Chief Executive, Wessex Learning Trust

Brian Kirkup
Chair of the Wessex Learning Trust