

19 May 2020

Dear Parents/Carers

You will be aware that last week, the Government announced a desire for a number of children in primary schools to return to school after what would have been half term. They also have asked secondary schools to provide some face to face support for students in Years 10 and 12. Your child's Headteacher may have already contacted you to gather your views on these plans and ask if you would consider your child returning to school at this time.

Children and Young People in Years 7, 8 and 9 will definitely not return to school before September - unless they are in the vulnerable or critical worker group. The Government has said that it would like other primary aged children – those in Years 2, 3, 4 and 5 to attend before the end of July. However, we do believe that it is unlikely that we will be able to bring all of these year groups back.

For many of you who have children in the target year groups (R,1, 6, 10 and 12), your decision over whether or not your child will attend school in June will depend on a variety of different factors, not least whether you feel confident that your child will be safe in school. If you decide not to send your child back, this will NOT count against your child in terms of their attendance record.

To assist with our plans, the Department for Education has released multiple guidance documents which describe the arrangements that they expect us to make in order to mitigate the risk of mixing children, young people and adults in schools. As some of this guidance is not particularly clear, I wanted to write to you to let you know how the Headteachers and senior leaders in the schools across Uffculme Academy Trust are working together to make sense of the guidance and ensure that if and when more children do return to school, they are as safe as we can possibly make them. Alongside this, of course, we are also working to minimise the risk to staff in school.

Firstly, I would like to reassure you that no school will open to more children or young people if the Headteachers do not feel that it is reasonably safe to do so. We are currently completing thorough risk assessments which take account of issues such as social distancing, staggered start and finish times, minimising contact between different groups, cleaning and hygiene measures, use of toilets, break and lunch times and the use of PPE if staff and students/children become unwell or are injured. When these risk assessments are complete, we will take them to the Board of Directors who oversee the schools.

It is important to explain that for groups of returning children, school will be very different to how it was when they left.

- Children will be in smaller groups – no more than 15 and they will not have the opportunity to mix with children in other groups.
- Social distancing – especially for older pupils will be strictly enforced. Younger children will be encouraged to socially distance as much as possible.
- Social distancing will also operate for parents and carers.
- Children and young people may not be with their usual teachers.
- Classrooms will be cleaned regularly and surfaces wiped frequently. Older children may be asked to wipe surfaces themselves.

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- Hygiene measures and personal hygiene will be a high priority.
- Start and finish times will be slightly different for different groups – as will break and lunchtimes.
- We will continue to provide free meals for those who are entitled; all other children will need to bring a packed lunch.
- Some schools may take the decision to run mornings only
- Lunches may be eaten in classrooms depending on the circumstances of the school.
- The curriculum will be very different: teachers will plan lessons or face to face sessions carefully to determine what learning has taken place during the period of lockdown and prioritise next steps.
- We will not expect pupils to wear uniform.
- The behaviour policy will be amended to take account of the rules around social distancing and safe behaviour.

When plans are more complete and have been assessed, Headteachers will write to you again with some specific detail in terms of the exact arrangements for your school. This will include start and finish times and other information about what to expect from us as well as the measures that have been taken to protect staff and students. They will decide on the groups that children and young people will be in and will try to take account of siblings and friendship groups but will not be able to swop pupils in and out of groups. Each group will become its own “bubble” and there will be no opportunity to mix bubbles. Similarly key worker and vulnerable groups will become separate bubbles and will not be able to mix with other students.

It is entirely your decision whether to send your child back to school if they are eligible. If you decide not to do so, it will not have any negative impact on your relationship with the school, your child’s attendance record or their future opportunities. If you do decide to take up the offer of a place in June, we may send home an amended home school agreement for you to sign to confirm that you know and agree with the changed expectations of children and young people.

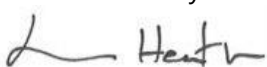
For children and young people who do not return to school before the summer, we will continue to set work remotely as we have been doing since March.

I would like to thank you whole-heartedly for your continued faith in and support of our schools and in particular the staff who have continued to work tirelessly for your children. The Headteachers have shown exceptional leadership over the last few months and are desperate to return to normality and welcome all of your children back into school.

We will keep in touch as plans become clearer and of course if things change.

In the meantime, I would like to send my warmest wishes to all of you and your families at this time.

Yours sincerely



Lorraine Heath - CEO