

The Harlington & Sundon Academy Trust



'LEARNING FOR LIFE'

18th May 2020

Dear Parents and Carers

Dear Parents,

I hope this letter finds you all safe and well. You will have seen in the national news that schools plan to reopen in some form from 1st June for Nursery, Reception, Year 1 and Year 6 pupils if the Government thinks it is safe to do so at that time. In my previous letter to all parents, I informed you that I am waiting for clear guidance from both the Local Authority and the Department for Education as to how the announced wider opening of schools can be implemented in a safe manner. In the meantime, I have written to parents of children in Nursery, Reception and Year One, the year groups whose return we are asked to plan for, to enable them to share their feelings at this time. My sincere thanks to the vast majority of parents who completed the short survey along with voicing their concerns. Your questions and feedback are valued and will support our planning. Going forwards, further guidance we will be given to parents and carers seeking to answer these questions and allay their concerns.

The government has made it clear that these are **the only year groups** it plans to bring back to school at this time, regardless of the school system (i.e. 3 tier with transition points in Year 4 and Year 8). However, the government's ambition is to bring back all primary aged children for at least some time before the summer holidays, again, as long as it is safe to do so. Ensuring your Year 4 child has a successful transition to their next school remains a key priority for us. The local authority is also lobbying central government to see if bringing those year groups (Y4 and Y8) into school sooner is possible. I will keep you informed.

I know that it is a very unsettling time, but rest assured, we are doing everything we can to make sure it is calm and safe for school to reopen in the coming weeks. This includes working very closely with the DfE, the local authority, unions and HAST schools within our cluster to ensure safety, consistency and fairness for all our families and children.

The Academy's Senior Leaders and myself have worked tirelessly last week to digest and implement the guidance, seek answers to the countless questions it gives rise to, plan for actions required and assess all risks presented and seek to mitigate them where possible. I am sure you will understand the comprehensive workload this has delivered. Schools continue to receive further Government guidance on a daily basis and as such we strive to digest and plan for further challenges in planning to widen the opening of our school to children in the named year groups.

The HAST schools are now at the stage of creating detailed plans that we will share with you, so that you know what the school's reopening will look like in practice and how we plan to make it as safe as is possible for everyone. Thank you for bearing with us; we are being asked to do something that has never been done before and for which there is no blueprint.

Plans will include key changes:

- Limiting class sizes
- Staggering break times, and pick-up and drop-off times
- Changes to timetables and the curriculum
- Increased cleaning regimes

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- Significant measures will be put into place to promote social distancing including zoned play spaces, children seated apart and designated toilet facilities. However, the Government have made it clear that “early years and primary age children cannot be expected to remain 2 metres apart from each other and staff” and as such, I am unable to guarantee this social distancing requirement to you.

As with the government’s ‘tiny tweaks and ultimate caution’ approach to coming out of lockdown, please do not expect that it will be ‘normal’ school if we are able to return from 1st June. We need to set up plans and timetables in order to accommodate everyone safely in much smaller classes, continue with key worker provision and ensure we can still expand to bring in more year groups in the near future.

The government would like to strongly encourage parents of children in returning year groups (YN, YR, Y1, Y6) to send their children into school. Getting back to school in some form before the summer will enormously support children’s mental well-being, social skills and academic progress. However, the government has made it clear that there will **not be any penalties** at this stage for non-attendance. For the time being, the school’s usual attendance policy (including the use of fines) will not be used. Each family has the freedom to make a decision based upon their own personal circumstances and we will gladly discuss and support your decisions.

In the meantime, school is still open **only** for vulnerable pupils and the children of critical key workers and will continue this week based at Ramsey Lower our ‘hub’, until half term. We know some employers will be encouraging you to return to work, but we are not currently in a position to extend places to other children until we receive further government guidance.

Throughout this challenging time I hope to offer as much information and support to you as is possible. I continue to work alongside staff and Trustees and communicate our intentions and plans with clarity so that you can make a calm and measured decision in supporting your child back into school. Our school is going to look quite different and your support in these adjustments will be greatly appreciated.

Parents and Carers of Nursery, Reception and Year 1 children will receive further information on our potential reopening. From your recent survey responses and questions, I have compiled a letter (which you will receive separately,) outlining the Academy’s plans and preparations for partial reopening, ensuring children and staff are kept safe. It will give answers to the concerns raised and the changes that we will have to make so that children can return to school and remain safe and well. You will then be asked to complete a short survey from this information with your informed decision. Thank you for your continued patience and understanding.

I would also like to thank you for your continued support in helping your child learn from home, and for keeping in touch with us. You have been truly remarkable.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'C White', with a horizontal line underneath.

Mrs C White
Head Teacher