

Wednesday 20<sup>th</sup> May 2020

Dear Parents & Carers,

You will be aware that last week the Government announced a plan for children in Reception, Year 1 and Year 6 to begin to return to school from the 1<sup>st</sup> June.

To help schools with this they have released a huge amount of guidance documents over the last 7 days. These have trickled into schools over the last week. Senior leaders from across the Trust have spent a considerable amount of time unpicking and discussing the various aspects of the guidance and how it relates to our schools and to Lingfield Trust. I therefore thought it would be useful for me to write to you to outline our thinking at this stage and to begin to set out what school may look like for those children who are in a position to return.

It is important to point out that the majority of our schools have been open throughout the COVID-19 pandemic including through Easter and each of the bank holidays. I am so grateful to all of our Trust staff for their hard work and commitment to enable this childcare to take place. Most of the Trust's schools will also be open throughout the upcoming half term.

Our childcare provision for Key Workers and Vulnerable children continues to be a priority and remains unchanged going forwards.

Children are the centre of all we do at Lingfield Trust and we are very keen for their return to school. However, safety and safeguarding are always our number one priority and I have said from the very beginning that I am not prepared to do anything that I think might risk the welfare of our children, their families and of our staff.

I would like to make a few things clear about what school could look and feel like for those returning:

- Children cannot effectively social distance. We will do our very best to try to encourage this but with all children, regardless of age, it is virtually impossible. We will not be able to guarantee that your child will be able to socially distance at all times.
- The physical limitations of our classrooms mean that we may not be able to operate groups of 15 as suggested by the Government. Our groups might need to be much smaller in order to provide the best chance of social distancing.
- It is possible that in some cases your child will not be with their usual class teacher or teaching assistant. Classes will most likely be split (into "bubbles") and therefore each small group will work with a designated member of staff who will stay with



them the whole time. Pupils will not be able to mix with anyone outside of their small group even at playtimes and lunchtimes.



- The classrooms will look very different. All surfaces will have to be cleared to facilitate cleaning during the day and children in Year 1 and Year 6 will have to sit at individual desks.



- The usual end of year and summer activities will not take place. These include Sports Days, Year 6 productions, leaver's assemblies and Year 6 end of year celebrations. Arrangements for Transition to Secondary School for Year 6 pupils may not now take place.



- Children may see staff wearing Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) if they have to deal with any illness or sickness.



- The curriculum will be very different as group or paired activities can no longer take place, equipment cannot be shared and children will not be able to move freely around the classroom or school.



- Start and finish times and entrances / exits will be very different and will need to be used as requested in order to maintain a level of social distancing every day.



I think it is very important that as parents & carers you have the chance to speak with your children about how different school may look and feel if / when they return.



Our schools will be sharing with you their plans for ensuring that the return will minimise risks as far as possible. We hope that you will have the confidence to send your child back into the school environment. If you make the decision not to send your child back to school, please be reassured that this does not impact on your school place nor will you be questioned over your child's attendance. It is completely your decision. The Government have made it clear that usual attendance protocols will not be in effect over the summer term



Further to this, please be cautious about comparing our approach to the return to school with that of other schools locally. Each school is unique with regard to the size of its rooms, the layout of the buildings, the availability of its staff and the challenges they face. I am sure some schools will feel confident in carrying out the Government guidance to its fullest whilst others will have to take a different approach that better suits their context.

Over the course of the next few days we will be checking Risk Assessments, finalising our plans, and meeting with our Board of Trustees. You will receive a



letter from your school on **Wednesday 27<sup>th</sup> May**. The letter will provide the detail of how the school will operate, the measures being put into place, which children will be returning and when, and what you will need to do when you bring your child to school.

On 28<sup>th</sup> May the government will confirm whether schools will re-open on 1<sup>st</sup> June. This will only happen if the 5 tests that they have made have been met. It could be that schools will reopen at a later date if that is not the case. I would like to remind parents that the timescales imposed on us are beyond our control and we have made our best endeavour to plan and give you information in the right order and as quickly as possible.

I feel it is important to be open and transparent. It is highly unlikely that all children from Nursery, Reception, Year 1 and Year 6 will be asked back into school on the 1<sup>st</sup> June. We know this decision is about safety and wellbeing and therefore we cannot get this wrong - a careful approach would be to gradually build-up the number of children and staff on our sites over time. Please therefore be patient as we implement this approach; we are trying to ensure that schools are as safe as possible.

Our provision for the children of key workers remains unchanged. The Government's published list of key workers remains the same so we do not anticipate this group growing in number during the coming weeks.

I would like to thank you and all of our school communities for their support throughout this challenging time and I hope you can understand that our ambition is to bring our children back to school in a safe and well-planned manner. As always, we will keep all of our decisions under regular review and make sure you are informed every step of the way. I feel it's important to remember that there is light at the end of the tunnel here and in the not too distant future I can see a time where all children are back at school all of the time. We are really excited for this to happen but in the meantime my priority is to ensure that between now and then we are making safe and careful plans.

Please keep checking our websites for updates and the school specific letters which will be sent out next Wednesday.

I look forward to seeing you all as soon as it is safely possible.

Yours sincerely,



**Nick Blackburn FRSA**  
**Chief Executive Officer**