



Horizons Specialist Academy Trust
Providing infinite opportunities

Chief Executive

Elizabeth Horne CBE

Horizons Specialist Academy Trust
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Dear Parent/Carer

I am sure you are aware that the Education Secretary, Gavin Williamson, announced on Monday 11th May that the Government would like mainstream primary schools to begin to plan to re-open from 1st June to certain year groups and to increase the overall number of children attending by the end of the summer term.

In relation to our Horizons Specialist Academies Trust (HSAT) and its academies, I would ask you to note:

1. There is no such directive for special schools.
2. The Trust's academies, unlike mainstream schools and academies, have never been directed to close and have therefore remained open for the past 8 weeks since 23rd March when mainstream schools were directed to close.
3. The guidance for special schools is that children and young people whose risk assessment indicates that their needs can be safely or more safely met in school should be encouraged to attend. This, in fact, is what the Trust has been doing over the time that our academies have remained open.
4. Children and young people who are considered extremely clinically vulnerable have been shielded at home and these children and young people should continue to be shielded and should not be expected to attend school from 1st June.
5. Children and young people who are clinically vulnerable (but not clinically extremely vulnerable) may be at higher risk of severe illness from coronavirus and, following medical advice, parents and carers have kept pupils and students who are clinically vulnerable at home. Parents and carers should continue to follow medical advice in order to determine whether it is safe for their child to return to school.
6. Parents who do not wish to return their children to school at the present time will not be subject to fines for their non-attendance.

Over the past number of weeks our Trust has had up to 10% of our children and young people attending our academies. We would like to see more of our children and young people in our academies but we must ensure that the individual risk assessment indicates that a child or young person is safe in school. In addition, we need to maintain the good social distancing and other safety procedures we have been following.

The safety of our children and staff remains our top priority and we want to assure you that, to date, this priority has guided our practice and it will continue to do so.

Over the next 2-3 weeks our Principals and senior leaders will be in contact with you to discuss and update where appropriate the risk assessment for your child. This will assist in identifying the children and young people who may benefit most from being in school. However, the requirement of maintaining social distancing and taking account of the health needs of our very vulnerable children and young people means that we will be unable to have all pupils and students in school at any one time.

Our aim is to have numbers of students attending each of our academies while enabling us to maintain – whenever possible - essential social distancing. This might result, consequently, in full-time or part-time attendance. Staff, too, will be on-site on a rota and timetabled basis in line with student numbers and social distancing requirements. We would hope to increase these numbers over time and as the situation improves.



In addition, a number of our staff are clinically extremely vulnerable and are shielding and are therefore not able to come into our academies to support our pupils and students. We will be working to identify the best arrangements for those pupils and students who may not have access to their usual teaching and support staff.

I would want to assure you that, in everything we are planning, our paramount concern is the safety and wellbeing of children, young people and staff in line with Government guidance. If this guidance changes, and we have to alter the number of children and young people attending, we will keep you informed.

In the meantime, I would thank you for your support in circumstances which none of us could ever have imagined. Like you, we wish to see as many of our children and young people as possible being supported within our educational communities and family.

We will continue to follow the guidance '*stay alert, control the virus and save lives*'.

Over the next 2-3 weeks you will also receive a letter from the Principal of the academy your child/young person attends to make you aware of the specific arrangements there and how we are keeping children and staff safe.

Lastly, you will find below a list of the Government guidance which underpins our approach and decision-making.

Opening schools and educational settings to more pupils from 1 June: guidance for parents and carers

Updated 11 May 2020

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/closure-of-educational-settings-information-for-parents-and-carers/reopening-schools-and-other-educational-settings-from-1-june>

Actions for education and childcare settings to prepare for wider opening from 1 June 2020

Updated 12 May 2020

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/actions-for-educational-and-childcare-settings-to-prepare-for-wider-opening-from-1-june-2020/actions-for-education-and-childcare-settings-to-prepare-for-wider-opening-from-1-june-2020>

Coronavirus (COVID-19): implementing protective measures in education and childcare settings

Updated 12 May 2020

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-implementing-protective-measures-in-education-and-childcare-settings/coronavirus-covid-19-implementing-protective-measures-in-education-and-childcare-settings>

My very best regards to you and your family.

Yours sincerely



Elizabeth Horne CBE
Chief Executive
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