LINK ACADEMY TRUST

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Monday 18th May.

Arrangements for Link Academy Trust school Opening 1st June

Dear parents and carers,

As you will be aware the press over the past week has been full of the issues surrounding the partial opening of our schools from 1st June for Early Years, Reception, Year 1 and Year 6 children, **if it is safe to do so.** I have deliberately held off from writing to you until I have been able to fully assess the implications of all these arguments and consider how they affect our small primary schools.

On the 11th May the Government published further detailed information for parents about the planned re-opening: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/closure-of-educational-settings-information-for-parents-and-carers/closure-of-educational-settings-information-for-parents-and-carers

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

To prevent the spread of coronavirus, The Link Academy Trust schools will follow guidance in these documents and use a range of protective measures to create the safest environments we can to reduce the risk of spreading the virus. Approaches we are asking our schools to take include:

- carrying out a detailed risk assessment before opening to more children, including deep cleans beforehand, provision of PPE for emergencies etc
- making sure that children do not attend if they or a member of their household has symptoms of coronavirus
- promoting regular hand washing for 20 seconds with running water and soap or use of sanitiser and ensuring good respiratory hygiene by promoting the catch it, bin it, kill it approach
- cleaning more regularly on frequently touched surfaces, such as door handles, handrails, tabletops, play equipment and toys
- minimising contact through smaller classes or group sizes and altering the environment as much as possible, including changing the layout of classrooms
- reducing mixing between groups through timetable changes, such as staggered break times or by introducing staggered drop-off and collection times

All Academy Heads have used a detailed checklist linked to all the information we have received to date to ensure that consideration has been fully undertaken and all possible actions are in place to mitigate the risks we are being made aware of. The last two bullet points are major considerations which will be different in every school.

I would point out though that our schools, in general, occupy small buildings on small sites and in many we have little space to use to manage the risks, however all Academy Heads are looking for the best solutions to implement the guidance as effectively as possible.

The Academy Heads will be sending a separate letter to you to outline what they have done in terms of risk mitigation. They will also set out the specifics of arrival times, arrangements for parents dropping and collecting children and where children will be learning etc. As part of this the arrangements for Key Workers and Vulnerable children to attend will continue but there may be tweaks to these measures to ensure effective and safe operation of the school continues, again your Academy Head will inform you of any changes.

There are some other important things you need to know.

- Our schools will feel different, but we will always be there to re-assure and help children understand what we are doing for everyone's safety
- To be as safe as possible you will be asked not to come into the school building, instead to drop children at a designated area where staff will take pupils. Please always remember to be two metres apart at the school gate.
- All children will be in smaller classes, they will not mix with other groups during the school day as far as that is possible and will have different break times.
- **Attendance. Whether your child attends during this period of time is your decision. If you feel worried about your child or your family's safety, we are happy to discuss this with you, but ultimately the choice is yours. No action will be taken (such as a penalty notice) if you decide it is not safe to send your child to school.**

In order to assess the number of children expecting to attend and the refinement of our operational arrangements I ask you to complete the Survey Monkey questionnaire/ online survey, Academy Heads will be sending out to you.

It is vital you do this to help us provide the very safest learning environment for your children.

We will be ensuring each school will provide up to date information on their website and in newsletters so that parents will know exactly what arrangements are in place in each setting.

I would like to reiterate that clinically vulnerable or shielded children will not be expected to attend any schools, and those children who live with someone who is medically certified as clinically extremely vulnerable should only attend if stringent social distancing can be adhered to. I am worried that it is unlikely as very young children are unable to follow instructions on social distancing consistently, so we do not expect those individuals to attend unless parents understand this. If you wish to discuss this issue please contact your Academy Head.

Finally, I understand that parents may have real misgivings about their children returning to school, I wholeheartedly understand this and repeat that it is parent's choice and there are no formal consequences should you decide that this is not the time for your child to return. Please remember though that we are here to help and support families. If you need that help or support, please contact your Academy Head initially, they will discuss the actions their school has in place and how it will impact on your child.

Thank you for supporting us, as always, especially in these difficult times when decisions such as these are so hard to make.

Kind regards,

Nicky

Nicky Dunford, CEO

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