



08 July 2020

Dear Parent/Carer

We have now had chance to review the DfE guidance published on Thursday the 2<sup>nd</sup> July. The government has now clarified an expectation for schools to reopen fully in the autumn term. It is a stated expectation that pupils should be able to access a full curriculum entitlement that is broad and balanced. This objective is framed within the context of maintaining stringent controls to promote health and safety and minimise the risk of transmission of COVID-19 as much as we are able to do so.

I absolutely see the need to try to provide everyone with clarity about how we will re-open in September. However, I am clear that we are not able to do this at the moment, as the beginning of the autumn term is still eight weeks away. In our view, a much more cautious and phased approach to our planning is necessary:

## Phase One:

We need to be completely transparent about what we are considering in response to the guidance and provide time for you and our staff to respond to our proposal. We are setting out our thoughts in this document and we want you to respond by **3pm on Thursday 9<sup>th</sup> July**. Please click the link below to complete our parent consultation survey:

[https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=IUVmEPIfGE2U9SfICX2T\\_QSGWCcmqFZJneDzY5IqOhNUMTZaVzA4WDQ5VDNHR000ODYxQjVIVIVRMi4u](https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=IUVmEPIfGE2U9SfICX2T_QSGWCcmqFZJneDzY5IqOhNUMTZaVzA4WDQ5VDNHR000ODYxQjVIVIVRMi4u).

We will summarise the responses we have had and publish these in a letter to everyone on **Friday 10<sup>th</sup> July**.

## Phase Two:

Senior leaders will return to school on the 5<sup>th</sup> August and we will review the local data and begin more detailed planning. This will also give us time to finalise comprehensive plans to ensure we have a clear plan for remote delivery, should we need this. As you are aware, we have already been working with all the other schools in the Trust, developing our approach for the continued delivery of a remote home-learning curriculum. This is important as we know we may need to be ready to move some or all pupils back to remote learning quickly, should the situation change.

50 Trenant Road Leicester LE2 6UA

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After the 5<sup>th</sup> August, we will consider any outcomes of further government reviews; we will also look at local data and information on transmission rates again.

We will then write to staff and parents on the **14<sup>th</sup> August** with a phase two consultation document.

### Phase Three:

We will write again with finalised details for the re-opening of the school on **Wednesday 19th August**.

We can confirm now that all pupils will start school on Thursday 27<sup>th</sup> August, after staff preparation days on 24<sup>th</sup>, 25<sup>th</sup> & 26<sup>th</sup> August to undertake further training on the updated risk assessment and associated mitigations to enable the wider re-opening of the school for all pupils.

### Phase one response to DfE guidance

This is our initial response to the DfE guidance regarding the full reopening of schools published on 2<sup>nd</sup> July. The government, supported by Public Health England, has highlighted the importance of the following controls which must always be in place to minimise transmission:

1. Minimise contact with individuals who are unwell by ensuring that those who have coronavirus (COVID-19) symptoms, or who have someone in their household who does, do not attend school.
2. Clean hands thoroughly more often than usual.
3. Ensure good respiratory hygiene by promoting the 'catch it, bin it, kill it' approach.
4. Introduce enhanced cleaning, including cleaning frequently touched surfaces often, using standard products such as detergents and bleach.

If we look back and reflect on our experiences since we opened small school provision on Monday 23<sup>rd</sup> March, we have learnt a great deal about the management and application of these controls:

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- We have developed significant resilience and understanding of the risk management process when focused on infection control, based on the technical expertise from our partners at Bellrock FM through detailed risk assessments.
- We have benefitted from the excellent standards delivered by our Ridgecrest cleaning team who know our site well and have a track record of high standards of work.
- We have an established team of staff who have the capacity to respond to suspected cases of COVID-19 through the use of PPE and a designated isolation room.
- The vast majority of our staff have been actively delivering small school provision.
- Staff who have taken part in face to face provision since the 8<sup>th</sup> June have reported a high level of confidence in the management of controls.
- We have had positive feedback from parents and carers who have reported confidence in small school provision and the way that this has been managed.
- We have continued to benefit from strong governance. I have been accountable for presenting plans and detailed risk assessments to both Trustees and the Local Governing Body throughout this phased reopening process. We have continued to operate with their full confidence. The quality of our risk assessment application was reflected in a report from Claire Maclean (CEO) on 11<sup>th</sup> June.

These factors demonstrate that we have the capacity to operate within a controlled environment.

### Full re-opening: Implementing the controls

Controls 1-4 can be implemented to enable the full reopening of the school in the autumn term to all pupils including all areas of the curriculum. The leadership team is clear that pupils must have access to a full curriculum entitlement from the start of term in keeping with national expectations.

These are the initial, practical steps that are under consideration to implement all controls

1. Minimise contact with individuals who are unwell by ensuring that those who have coronavirus (COVID-19) symptoms, or who have someone in their household who does, do not attend school.
  - Proactive communication to staff and parents before the autumn term to clarify symptoms, updated guidance to ensure that individuals with symptoms will not attend school.

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- Regular communication regarding symptoms will be published and updated accordingly.
  - Visitors to the site will not be permitted without a prearranged appointment authorised by the Principal or Head of Primary.
  - Individuals who develop symptoms will be supported in a medical isolation room and they will be sent home.
  - We will maintain accurate registers to ascertain contact tracing.
  - We will promote and adhere to NHS Track and Trace.
  - We will consult with Public Health England where we become aware of suspected symptoms or individuals who have tested positive for coronavirus.
2. Clean hands thoroughly more often than usual.
- We will ensure that all staff and pupils sanitise their hands on arrival to our site. (i.e. staff washing hands, pupils using sanitising stations).
  - We will ensure that pupils sanitise their hands at each change of activity using a sanitising station.
  - We will enhance personal hygiene by ensuring hand sanitising after break and lunch times.
  - We have updated our behaviour policy and communicated expectations clearly to all stakeholders.
  - We will treat non-compliance, particularly in relation to unhygienic behaviour, with great seriousness.
  - We will ensure enhanced supervision in areas outside the classroom.
  - Staff will ensure that pupils have an understanding of the importance of good hygiene practices.
3. Ensure good respiratory hygiene by promoting the 'catch it, bin it, kill it' approach.
- We will ensure that all pupils have access to tissues and are supported in knowing how to use and dispose of them safely.
  - We will ensure good ventilation in all working spaces (i.e. through open doors, windows).
  - We will ensure the safe disposal of any products that are possibly contaminated at the end of each working day.
  - Staff will ensure that pupils have an understanding of 'catch it, bin it, kill it'.

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- We will treat non-compliance, particularly in relation to unhygienic behaviour, with great seriousness.
4. Introduce enhanced cleaning, including cleaning frequently touched surfaces often, using standard products such as detergents and bleach.
- We will ensure an enhanced regime of cleaning of hard contact surfaces to reduce the opportunity for virus transmission at the end of each working day.
  - All internal doors will remain open to limit touch points.
  - We will ensure that additional cleaning capacity and sanitation supplies are in place to maintain a clean site (i.e. hand sanitiser, disposable glove supply).
  - We will ensure the safe disposal of products at the end of each working day with special treatment of any products that are possibly contaminated.
  - We will maintain transparent records of all cleaning schedules.
  - This provision will be professionally managed by our cleaning contractors, Ridgecrest.

### Further considerations

The DfE guidance is clear that schools must carefully consider the controls that can be put into place whilst ensuring a full curriculum entitlement.

The guidance promotes schools to consider organising the school so that pupils remain in bubbles. It is acknowledged that children in primary schools, and especially the youngest children, cannot reliably socially distance from staff or from each other and therefore this does not provide an additional protective measure. Maintaining distinct groups or 'bubbles' that do not mix makes it quicker and easier in the event of a positive case to identify those who may need to self-isolate, and keep that number as small as possible. However, the use of small groups restricts the normal operation of schools and presents both educational and logistical challenges, including the cleaning and use of shared spaces, such as playgrounds, dining halls, and toilets, and the provision of specialist teaching.

In the guidance for the autumn term, maintaining consistent groups remains important, but given the decrease in the prevalence of coronavirus (COVID-19) and the resumption of the full range of curriculum subjects, schools need to change the emphasis on bubbles within their system of controls and increase the size of these groups.

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All school sites are very different so it may be more difficult to achieve for some schools than it is for others. Following consideration of our school, the leadership team have been discussing the pupil experience and classroom arrangements and our ability to apply the system of controls as part of our careful considerations for reopening.

### Plans from September

We accept that we will not be able to maintain single year group bubbles in the true sense of a bubble that 'protects' a vulnerable group or person from the risk of infection if all pupils return to school. This is because we accept that we have many children who are siblings and live together and are not in the same year group. We accept that we are not able to guarantee that pupils from different year groups will not mix outside of school, particularly as part of extended family groups.

We have constructed initial plans and it will be difficult for us to maintain year group bubbles when all pupils return, because different year groups share the same facilities and corridor space; though we are clear that we need to minimise mixing as much as possible.

We are proposing to operate a normal timetable of lessons and pupils will be taught in their usual classrooms. In this model we need to consider how much we can minimise mixing (minimising any situation where the children are with children from another group and would potentially be face to face and talking to them). Primary age pupils share an environment where it would be difficult to prevent pupils from mixing whilst undertaking their curriculum activities, using toilet facilities and engaging in a full curriculum.

All EYFS pupils would be able to use the Early Years and outdoor learning environments. We would not have any large gatherings for pupils, including assemblies / collective worship: we will deliver these virtually whilst the pupils are in their class groups. In order to continue offering a full curriculum offer, staff will move classrooms for different lessons and pupils will remain in their classrooms.

We would ensure that break and lunchtimes are staggered with pupils given separate areas and timing so that mixing is minimised. Controls in place during transitions are important in this model, particularly during break and lunch times, and entering / exiting the site. We would need to ensure that movement during transitions is controlled to minimise the possibility of mixing, or face to face contact or transmission.

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## Wraparound Care

In-line with DfE guidance we intend to resume our Wraparound provision from the start of the autumn term. We will be offering both before and after school care. Where possible children should not mix between groups and consequently we will be reducing opportunities for mixing between class bubbles during wraparound care, and adhering to social distancing guidelines as far as possible. All pupils will sanitise their hands on arrival to wraparound and will be supported in maintaining hygiene procedures throughout.

There is still much for us to do. Colleagues from across all schools in the Trust are re-writing risk assessments for all practical subjects such as music, performing arts and physical education, so that we alter the curriculum we deliver in line with the current guidance. We will not simply remove subjects from the curriculum. The guidance from the government has made it clear that we will not receive any support for the additional costs we face and so we will need to re-write our budget, with the support of the Trust, because it is clear we will be facing high costs for additional cleaning and sanitation.

We hope that outlining our thinking to you does give you some reassurance about what September will look like in that we are ambitious to ensure:

- All pupils make a full time return to education
- We will deliver the full timetable and therefore a full and positive educational experience for all
- Our planning for the possibility of returning to a remote model of delivery will be much more confident

As is outlined above, **please respond to the survey by 3pm on Thursday 9<sup>th</sup> July.** I will then be writing to you again on Friday 10<sup>th</sup> July before we break for the end of term.

We are confident that we can always build the resilience of our pupils by raising our expectations of their conduct so that the new procedures are carefully managed and do not cause additional risks. All pupils (even the very youngest) and staff have continued to demonstrate adaptability, willingness and readiness to work together since the initial closure of schools in March. We are well placed to deliver a broad curriculum and give our pupils their entitlement and opportunities toward progression and life chances.

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Please note, we will **not** be adjusting our uniform expectations for September and so our normal arrangements for uniform apply and these can be found on our website. We know that some families may be facing unanticipated financial hardship at the moment and if this is the case and you feel you may need support then please contact us on [office@samworth.tgacademy.org.uk](mailto:office@samworth.tgacademy.org.uk)

Thank you for your continuing support and encouragement, this has been so important to us all and has sustained us throughout this term. I know I can rely on this going forward and this truly makes all the difference.

Yours sincerely

Mrs A Collins  
Head of Primary

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