

Dear families,

4th September 2020

First of all, I do very much hope that this communication finds you all in good health and positive spirits as we look towards the coming academic year.

As you will be aware, all schools across the country will be fully open from the beginning of September. We very much support this and are looking forward to welcoming our children back. We are also pleased that the Government has made clear that all pupils are expected to attend. Our children have missed far too much school and it would be an even greater travesty if this medical pandemic were to evolve into a pandemic of educational poverty. We are therefore very keen to get all of our children back into the classroom and into a positive routine of learning as soon as possible.

We are very conscious that for all our communities there will be a degree of nervousness about returning to school and feeling safe. It will understandably take a little time for that confidence to return and we will do all we can to provide reassurance and support. The government has issued guidance and parents/carers are encouraged to visit gov.uk/backtoschool for information and practical guidance to help them plan for their children's return to school.

The primary priority for every Waterton Academy Trust academy is always the wellbeing of our young people and staff. Our approach throughout this pandemic has been not to formulate our own measures but rather to adhere to the guidelines issued by the experts working for Government and Public Health England. In order to reassure and communicate these measures, our academies have uploaded detailed individual risk assessments onto their websites. These are based on the 'system of controls' issued by Public Health England. Whilst recognising each of our school's distinct contexts, our intention has been to adopt a homogenous approach wherever possible.

I have set out below the common approaches to be adopted across the Trust from September. All take their lead from the Public Health England 'System of Controls'. Schools will shape their more specific guidance to you around these Trust protocols.

All schools have completed comprehensive risk assessments that have been shared with staff and are on websites for parents and pupils to read.

Every young person will be placed into a consistent bubble. These will vary in size due to the physical layout of each building and the key stage that pupils are in.

Clear signage will be in place to shape movement around school to respect social distancing and minimise corridor crowding. This will include the implementation of one way systems wherever possible.

Classroom layout and seating arrangements have been adapted to minimise face to face contact.

The guidance on face coverings in Primary schools is that they are not required by pupils.

The shape of the day has been adapted to minimise social contact across bubbles. This may include a staggered start and finish time or altered lunch and break arrangements.

Assemblies and large gatherings will not take place.

Public gatherings such as Open Evenings and Parents Evenings will not take place in school until further notice. They will be replaced with remote or virtual events.

Protocols are in place to minimise visitors on site including contractors and parents.

Face to face staff and family meetings will be minimised and replaced with phone calls or online meetings where possible.

Some staff not involved in face to face work with pupils will work in offices on a rota, or work from home, in order to allow social distancing in office spaces and reduce contact between staff.

The movement of Trust colleagues between schools will be minimised to protect social bubbles.

There are clear procedures for managing staff or children that display symptoms whilst in school.

When pupils and staff return to school there will be a very thorough induction as to how we have organised our day to day activity to keep everyone safe.

Questions regards lost learning and catch up curriculums are rightly being put to us by parents and colleagues from within the education sector. I can reassure you that we have invested heavily over the summer in new technologies and innovations in teaching and learning. These will be at the heart of our catch up strategy and our Trust colleagues will be supporting schools with their deployment. However, we are adamant that before we can prescribe, we must first assess. We therefore request that parents allow our children time to settle back into school life and our staff time to identify where they are in their learning. We will then work in partnership with parents to support them on their road to recovery.

We recognise that it will take time for us to become accustomed to this new normality. Moreover, that the 'dancing on quicksand' nature of the situation may result in further measures being introduced. However, we are confident that by working together we can assure that for all at Waterton, success truly will be a shared experience.

If you have concerns of any kind please get in touch. Contact details are on each of our academy websites.

Yours sincerely,



Dave Dickinson OBE

CEO

Waterton Academy Trust