

21<sup>st</sup> May 2020

Dear Parents, carers and families,

## **Plans for the further re-opening of Northern Star Academies Trust Schools**

Following a week of furious media debate about schools opening more widely, it is now timely and pertinent for me to write to you explaining the provisional approach that we are taking across all **Northern Star Academies Trust schools**.

As a parent of secondary aged children and a teacher of many years, I have complete empathy and understanding for the position both parents/carers and our staff have found themselves in over the last two months. On behalf of our Trust and Headteachers, I would like to thank you for the incredible efforts that you have gone to, to support your children with home-learning as well as the support you have shown our staff during this exceptionally difficult period of time.

It is important to point out that our schools have remained open throughout the COVID-19 pandemic and for some of our schools during Easter, Bank holidays and weekends. They have remained open for the children who have needed our support and our care. I am extremely grateful to all our teaching and associate staff for their hard work and commitment in support of emergency workers and our vulnerable children. Our provision for key workers and vulnerable children will remain unchanged throughout the next half term as we start to bring other groups of children back into school and expand out provision.

### **Primary Schools:**

#### **When will our Primary Schools reopen?**

If we receive the go-ahead from the government on **28<sup>th</sup> May**, when certain national criteria will need to be met, our **provisional plan** is as follows:

**w/c 1<sup>st</sup> June** All staff from across Northern Star Academies Trust will undergo comprehensive Induction and CPD to prepare them for all aspects of the safe and secure re-opening of their schools. We will be using this week to ensure our Primary Schools are completely ready and meet the highest standards of safety and safeguarding. Home- education will continue as normal.

All our schools this week will remain open for vulnerable children and those from key worker families.

**w/c 8<sup>th</sup> June** **We will begin a phased re-introduction starting with Year 6, then Year 1 and Reception provision – gradually expanding this provision over time.**

**Each Headteacher will communicate the exact details of their delivery model in the coming days and will confirm any updates prior to the above start date.**

We have made the very carefully considered decision to **not open any of our Nursery or Wraparound provisions, until September 2020**. Our analysis of staffing capacity shows that we do not have sufficient staff to meet the statutory requirements to deliver this provision. We will, of course keep parents/carers fully notified in readiness for the next academic year.

Children of key workers and vulnerable pupils from all year groups will continue to be able to attend throughout this period, though please look out for communications from your child's school to check for any changes to their provision.

### **Does my child have to come to school?**

We sincerely hope that every family in the Primary year groups offered will return their children to school feeling comfortable with the measures we have in place (see below). However, the complexity of the last few months means that we will have some children and families who cannot take up places due to shielding or may feel uncertain and anxious. I can categorically share that we will respect the individual decisions made by our families at this uncertain time.

### **What will our offer involve and what control measures are in place to ensure my child's safety?**

Working alongside national advice, our respective Local Authorities and various external health and safety bodies, our Trust has produced a comprehensive risk assessment process. Every school within the Trust has used this to guide their detailed plans. Through this process, we have identified that our primary schools will need to phase their re-opening process due to the numbers of pupils who would be accessing the school site.

We have made provision for additional cleaning (including during the teaching day). We will also provide sanitising stations and other control measures, and will continue to enhance this according to need.

School meals will be served in the teaching space or on rota in the dining area, with social distancing measures, again, applied. Similarly, communal time such as breaks and lunchtime will be timetabled carefully and supervised to maintain social distancing.

All families accessing the school site will be given detailed guidance which may involve staggered start and finish times, changes to class bases and staffing, along with bespoke timetables for when on site. This will allow for social distancing when moving around the school site. Teaching spaces are being set up to maintain social distancing – class sizes will vary according to school and room layout, but no class will be larger than 15 pupils. Pupils will tend to work in these groups and movement between groups and spaces will be absolutely minimised.

Every school in the Trust has had to assess its pupil groups, staff capacity, space available and then consider a bespoke timetable which will undoubtedly mean a change to the curriculum on offer. We may need to make changes to our normal cycle of teaching, planning and provision according to staffing and individual need, but I am sure there will still be a positive impact from our pupils returning to school.

**When you receive the specific details from you Headteacher, please ensure you read the details from your child's school carefully as it is vital to ensure the wellbeing and safety of everyone involved.**

### **Transport to school**

We have been informed by our Local Authorities that school transport providers will be in touch with parents directly about their child's transport to school.

### **Secondary Schools**

#### **Which year groups are we reopening and why?**

We hope to provide some part time, face-to-face provision for students in **Years 10 and 12 only**. This is in line with the government guidance that states: "We will ask secondary schools, sixth form and further education colleges to offer some face-to-face support to supplement the remote

education of year 10 and year 12 students who are due to take key exams next year, alongside the full time provision they are offering to priority groups."

### **When will our Secondary Schools reopen?**

If we receive a go ahead from the government on 28<sup>th</sup> May when certain national criteria are met, our provisional plan is as follows:

**w/c 1<sup>st</sup> June** NSAT Secondary schools will only be open for vulnerable children and those from key worker families. On 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> June all Secondary staff will be participating in a comprehensive Induction/CPD programme.

**w/c 15<sup>th</sup> June** Staggered, part time, face-to-face supervision for some students in **Years 10 and 12 only** will begin.

We are currently awaiting further government guidance about what this means in practice. We hope to be in a position to share details of this provision with Year 10 and Year 12 families during the week beginning 1<sup>st</sup> June. At this time, we will also survey families to inform us of their intentions regarding return to school.

Please note, that the Secondary provision will be part time, and designed to support distance learning that will continue to be provided.

### **What about the other year groups?**

For any children not attending school, we will continue to maintain our distance learning offer. And, where possible run this parallel with onsite provision. However, please understand that our revised provision will see many more Trust staff working on a daily basis onsite and there may be less capacity to create online content.

In these unprecedented times I kindly ask for parents understanding and patience. We could never imagine that we would be facing such an extraordinary experience but rest assured, your child's safety and safeguarding are our number one priority.

Please do not hesitate to contact your child's school if you would like to discuss your child's provision further or have any questions – it is critically important that you feel comfortable with your child's safe return to education in school.

Yours faithfully,



Jenn Plews  
Chief Executive Officer