

Friday 5th June 2020

Dear Parents and Carers,

In some ways the English summer is beginning to return to normal, an example being the intermittent rain and sun! In parallel, WeST schools are very much looking forward to returning to a new normal and, above all else, seeing children back in their classrooms. I wish to wholeheartedly reassure you that we are desperately keen to welcome all of our children back into school and see them immersed in their curriculum studies. Unfortunately, it seems that a wholesale return of children remains some way off.

At each step of this recovery journey we have heeded government advice, put the health and safety of our children and staff first and supported the national drive to minimise the spread of infection. It is heartening to see that our collective efforts have not been wasted and that the total number of infections in our region compares most favourably with the national picture. Despite our best efforts in the south west there remains to be a series of new infections each day and as such we must tread forwards with care and vigilance.

It is on this basis that we have developed a 'toolkit' to guide our work for wider reopening and completed rigorous risk assessments of each school site.

We want to get this right. We want to get children back into our classrooms whilst keeping them, and our staff, safe and continuing to avoid spreading infection across our local community. In addition to heightened personal hygiene it is crucially important that we ensure appropriate social distancing in each school. It is for these reasons that our steps of wider reopening are incremental. Each school will establish its new systems, structures and expectations of social distancing. This will feel different for our children, but we believe that our thorough planning will enable them to settle confidently and quickly into their new routines.

I reiterate here that our primary schools will welcome back Year 6 and Year 1 children from Monday 8th June. It is anticipated that children in reception classes will return in the week beginning 22nd June. Schools will constantly review the situation and increase capacity as staffing and individual school circumstances allow. Each Headteacher will be sharing greater detail of their specific return plans.

Year 10 and 12 students will be returning in a phased fashion from Monday 15th June. Whilst each school is working to a common framework the individual intricacies of each school site and staffing profile will mean that the pattern from school to school may vary. As with the primary sector, Headteachers will be sharing the specific detail of their wider reopening plans.

STRONGER TOGETHER... EVERY CHILD IN A GREAT SCHOOL

As we enter this wider reopening phase, each school could be considered to be operating four mini-schools and it is this accumulation of activities that stretch our available resources.

Mini-school 1: Educare - This is now well established, has a clear routine and is providing essential provision. Educare will continue on a daily basis until the end of the summer term and is supported by a team of staff on a rota basis.

Mini-school 2: Supporting vulnerable children - Each school has designated colleagues who are keeping in regular touch with children and families and liaising where appropriate.

Mini-school 3: Home learning - E-learning will continue to be the core vehicle of curriculum delivery for the vast majority of our children for some time. Teaching staff are working remotely to lead and guide children through their acquisition of new knowledge.

Mini-school 4: Curriculum delivery - Those year groups invited to return to school will begin to re-engage with their subject learning.

As the number of children in 'Educare' has increased and as we preserve appropriate social distancing, this is placing pressure on the number of teaching rooms available for curriculum delivery. This pressure is exacerbated by the fact that some of our schools have smaller than average sized classrooms. As such, some of our returning teaching groups will be taught in class sizes of less than 15 in the first instance.

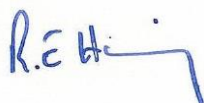
With this in mind, it will come as no surprise that I ask families to only seek 'Educare' places when they are truly eligible and all other avenues of care have been exhausted.

I also wish to draw to your attention that WeST has no plans to provide 'Educare' through the traditional summer holiday. All WeST schools will conclude the summer term for all children on Friday 17th July 2020.

I hope that this provides a useful general overview of our work and next steps.

Thank you for your continued support.

Yours sincerely



Rob Haring
CEO Westcountry Schools Trust