

23 May 2020

Dear Parents and Carers

I want to start by thanking you for all your hard work and dedication in supporting your child's continued learning at home. I can certainly appreciate the difficulties that you are all experiencing as we navigate our way through these challenging times. I also want to acknowledge the commitment of all our school leaders, teaching and support staff, who have kept our schools open for many children and young people, whilst supporting home learning. Like you, I look forward to being able to move on, once the virus is under control. I do hope that time comes soon.

Following the recent government announcement about the wider opening of schools, the Quantock Education Trust has focussed its efforts on considering the best options, for enabling our children to return safely to their school environment, to pick up their studies and re-establish their relationships with friends and teachers. We watch and consider carefully on a daily basis, guidance from the Department for Education and meet frequently and remotely across all our teams in order to inform our decision making.

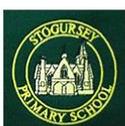
Our leaders, local governors and Trustees all understand the range of challenges and anxieties resulting from the lockdown situation and have been keen to hear your views, understand your feelings and hear about the many achievements of your children during this period. We have not rushed into making any quick decisions. We are aware, even now, that it is an evolving situation and our plans may need to change. Our planning has been driven, as always by the vision and values of our Trust and of each school in the Trust family. It is crucial that, as a community, we work collaboratively in planning measures for keeping our children safe, happy and healthy. We have a joint responsibility and duty of care, with some difficult decisions to make, but collectively we can deliver a strong response. We have mitigated at Trust and school level, the risks facing us in order to secure a controlled and safe environment.

Each school has purchased stocks of sanitisers, disinfectant, gloves, face masks and other protective equipment, putting time aside to ensure that all staff understand how the new measures are to be implemented, prior to the wider opening of the school. Protective equipment will be used in line with government guidance and a programme of deep cleaning will take place immediately before the wider opening commences in each school. Cleaners will exercise high levels of vigilance in all areas of their work.

Our schools have been communicating with you about our focus on mental health and well-being and we are creating materials, resources and timetabled sessions for our children and young people to be able to reflect on their recent experiences, celebrate their achievements and also talk about any concerns and worries. There will be staff available to deliver more specialised support where necessary. These materials are also available for the staff, equipping them with strategies for supporting the needs of our children. It is also important that we support the well-being of our staff, monitoring workload and individual needs and concerns.

The specifics of the school day, routines and learning will be issued to you by your child's school, but there will be some important and likely changes to normal practice, which I want to mention here;

- for some groups, the return will be gradual and part-time
- there will be continued provision for children of key workers and vulnerable groups
- class sizes will be limited in order to facilitate social distancing



- all children and staff will be encouraged to wash their hands on a regular basis, with appropriate supervision in our primary schools
- we shall adapt our curriculum to meet the needs of our children in each school
- break and lunchtimes will be staggered and social distancing will be observed
- you may be asked to provide a packed lunch
- it will not be necessary to wear school uniform in order to accommodate regular washing of clothes worn to school
- in our primary schools, children will be taught in small groups in dedicated spaces with the same teachers throughout -this will also apply in our secondary school, although there will be some specialist teaching for English, Mathematics and Science
- children will be taught at the same desk, with all desks appropriately distanced
- children will not be able to share their stationery or other resources – your school will let you know if stationery is to be provided or if they should bring their own
- outdoor space (separate and allocated areas) will be used, weather permitting, for some of the learning time in our primary schools
- outdoor equipment will not be used unless it can be thoroughly cleaned between sessions
- strict hygiene protocols will be followed, such as desks, handles and equipment being disinfected regularly
- soft play items will be removed
- one- way systems will be implemented in corridors
- outdoor entrances to classrooms will be used to avoid walking unnecessarily through other parts of the school
- toilet use will be controlled
- staff will also abide by strict social distancing guidelines
- school receptions will implement social distancing measures
- parents must follow school procedures for controlling drop off and picking up
- parents and children to be regularly surveyed to monitor the effectiveness and overall impact of measures introduced – adjustments will be made where required

Not all children will be returning at the same time, so it is vital that good communication is maintained and that you are all able to contact us regarding any confidential matters, so that we are able to offer support. Safeguarding remains a key priority for all.

Plans for returning are now well advanced and your child's school will be writing to you as parents and carers, with specific details and arrangements regarding the extended provision for our children, including starting dates and any phased arrangements for different year groups. We shall not however, open our schools unless we are confident that it is safe to do so. Managing social distancing in schools is problematic, which is why we have taken this time to consider the options.

We shall continue to work hard to ensure that;

- our Year 6, Year 1 and reception children are able to resume their learning with appropriate care and consideration of their needs
- our Year 6 children are able to celebrate their time at primary school and that they are ready to move up to their secondary schools
- our Year 11 students are able to celebrate their Haygrove careers, even if this has to happen when they have already effectively moved on to their next stage of learning
- our Year 10 students are supported before they enter their examination year
- all children learning at home continue to receive appropriate resources and support from their teachers

These are undoubtedly challenging and unprecedented times and we must do all we can to support all our children and young people, whatever their age, ability or background, in order to ensure that they get the best possible start in life. The Trust Board will monitor this situation closely, recognising that it is a changing picture, but crucially, that our priorities remain the safety and well-being of all our young people and staff.

I wish you all well in the coming weeks and trust that collectively we shall continue to flourish and succeed in our Trust community.

Yours faithfully

K. M. Canham

Karen Canham
CEO/Executive Headteacher