



Midsomer Norton Schools Partnership

11th June 2020

Dear Parents/Carers

I am writing to you today with some further updates regarding our response to the Coronavirus emergency. You will be aware that primary schools in the Trust re-opened to Nursery, Year R, 1 and 6 on the 1st of June. Generally, the plans devised by Headteachers have worked well and staff have been extremely supportive. Parents and carers have also been helpful and I would like to thank you all for your positive approach to social distancing and other routines in place at schools in the Trust. At this stage, there are no further plans to open primary schools for more year groups, as most schools are at capacity trying to accommodate the social distancing required for the current numbers attending. In fact, some schools are beginning to struggle to make the arrangements work, given the rise in numbers of vulnerable children and those of key frontline workers attending. As I mentioned in my last letter to you, it may become necessary for some schools to operate rotas for children or stop an entire year group from attending altogether, if numbers continue to rise. I know this will be very disappointing, but we are bound by the guidance from government on these decisions. Schools that need to change the current arrangements will notify you themselves, as many of the issues are site and staff-specific. They will make any notification by 11:30 am on the Friday for the following week. This may seem like short notice, but we are receiving a lot of last-minute requests for children of keyworkers and those that are vulnerable.

One positive piece of news for parents and carers of children at primary schools relates to work being set for children at home. We are now extending this to include those not at school in Years R, 1 and 6. Any work set will be available on the Trust web site.

Secondary schools open their doors to limited numbers of Year 10 and 12 pupils from the 15th June. All schools have in place plans that will allow every Year 10 to receive some face-to-face support in school between the 15th June and the end of the academic year. In the case of Year 12, we are focussing first on pupils who have not engaged, but have also planned in some schools, to invite other students back to receive face-to-face learning. Whilst the focus appears to be very much on the examination year groups, I do worry about the impact of limited face-to-face contact on Key Stage 3 pupils, particularly those in Year 7. Therefore, I have asked staff in the secondary schools to continue setting high quality home-learning for Years 7-9 and feed back to department and pastoral colleagues where they have concerns about low levels of engagement. I know all of the secondary schools are also operating a pastoral triage system to pick up on concerns. Therefore, please do contact your child's school directly if you are particularly worried or concerned about any issue.

In the first half term of the new academic year, all secondary schools will be running Y11 and Y13 (current Y10 and Y12) examinations. For Maths, English and Science, the Trust subject leads will work with departments in school to ensure a common approach to these examinations is in place. Whilst this may seem a little severe, these examinations will help schools and staff identify gaps in learning, but also support pupils as they prepare to sit mocks later in the year and ultimately, their GCSEs and A levels. In addition to this, we will also be investing a significant amount of time focussing on the mental well-being of children as they return from the disruption of this academic year.

School leaders have been considering how we might run transition for 2020/21. For Reception, we are planning to use the final 2 days of this academic year to arrange face-to-face contact for preschool children (16th and 17th July 2020). **This will mean the primary schools will be closed for these two days to all pupils except those of key front-line workers and those considered vulnerable.** For Year 6-7 transition, secondary schools are assembling video material for induction, including virtual tours. Some schools would also like to invite pupils in to have face-face contact, which will of course be arranged in small groups to meet the requirements of social distancing. Schools will notify all parents/carers directly of arrangements as these may vary from school-to-school.





www.midsomernortonschoolspartnership.com

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Finally, I do not envisage that any schools will be open over the Summer break. Of course, I will keep this under review depending on the development of the Coronavirus outbreak. If there is a rise in the infection rate and therefore prevalence of the illness in our communities, we will do our very best to support NHS staff and those on the frontline. As I write to you today, the South West R rate is reported to be at 1. Somerset and North Somerset are also at this level of infection transmission, with BANES still reporting the R rate well below 1. I will write again to you, once there is further guidance or a call for action.

Thank you for your continued support in what are very challenging and difficult times. I hope to be able to update you in the next month about plans for September, once further guidance is issued from the DFE. At this point, we are assuming that in the new academic year, we will see the return to some normality for schools.

Yours sincerely

Alun Williams
CEO

