

10th July 2020

Dear Parents/Carers

Return to School in September

It is the government's intention for all pupils to return to school in September. The government have made it clear that **All** children in England **must** go back to school on a full timetable, with the caveat that a "full return" of all pupils will be reconfirmed on August 11 after the latest Covid-19 data is considered.

I know that this is an anxious time for families and children and some of you will still be very worried about sending your children back to school. This letter will hopefully inform you of what the Trust will do to ensure the school is as safe as possible and ease some of your anxiety. Many children have already returned to school during the past few weeks and this has been a very positive and safe experience.

It is important to balance the public health risks in the short term (related to the transmission of the virus) with longer term public health considerations. If a child misses out on education, this can have an impact on that child across their whole lives - their economic prosperity and long-term health. Children benefit hugely from being at school.

Research tells us the risk to children themselves of becoming severely ill from coronavirus is low and there are negative health impacts of being out of school.

Each school will revise their current risk assessment and the Board of Trustees and I will sign this off. We will publish each school's risk assessment on the website so that you can see the measures we have taken.

Some measures are set down by Public Health England and are essential. These include:

- A requirement that people who are ill stay at home
- Robust hand and respiratory hygiene
- Enhanced cleaning arrangements
- Active engagement with NHS Test and Trace
- formal consideration of how to reduce contacts and maximise distancing between those in school wherever possible and minimise potential for contamination so far as is reasonably practicable.

When they return in September, your children will be in class 'bubbles'. They will only mix with the children in their bubble. We will still maintain staggered start and finish times, break times and lunch times. If your child attends Heartsease, they may be in a **year group** bubble for break time & some activities such as phonics.

There will be an enhanced strict and frequent cleaning regime in place.

All the rules in our new Home/School Agreement will continue to apply.

Children will sit on tables facing the front and they will be encouraged to socially distance as far as possible.

Children will eat their lunch in their classrooms to avoid bubbles mixing in the dining hall. Keystage 1 & Reception children will all continue to be provided with a free school meal and **should not** bring a lunch from home. (Parents who have already pre-arranged with Sarah Porter for their children to bring in a packed lunch from home due to health/dietary requirements, will still be able to do so). KS2 children may bring a packed lunch from home or order a lunch from school (children entitled to free school meals will not pay for this lunch).

Assemblies during this time will be class based or via video to avoid bubbles mixing.

Please reinforce constantly with your children the need for frequent handwashing and sanitising. We must all continue to wash our hands for 20 seconds frequently but especially:

- Before eating/drinking
- After using the toilet
- After touching frequently used touch points
- Before and after using public transport
- As soon as they enter the class or the home from outside
- After coughing or sneezing
- After touching pets

Please also remind your children if they cough or sneeze to use a tissue or if necessary, the crook of their arm and to throw the tissue into a bin – remember “Catch it, Bin it, Kill it.

If your child starts to develop symptoms at school, they will be isolated and you **must** collect your child **at once**. The school will have a small number of testing kits that you will be able to take home and use. **It is vital that you or your child are tested** if you experience any symptoms, so that the NHS test and trace system can alert anyone you have been in contact with. You **must** tell the school the results of the test. If it is negative, your child can return to school. **If it is positive, you and your family must self-isolate for 14 days and your child may not return to school during this time.**

Any child who does not return to school because they have been told they may not do so **by a specialist/consultant** or that is **self-isolating** will be set on line work and providing they are well will be expected to complete the work. If you do not have access to a device that can connect to the internet or the internet, inform your child’s school and they will provide your child with paper copies.

Meetings with parents will continue to be conducted on the phone or via video and access to the school will be extremely limited for parents and visitors.

In order to give children the best chance of returning to school in a stress free and calm environment, we will be returning earlier than usual. **Children will return to school on 2nd September.**

Nursery children will not return until 7th September.

For the **2nd, 3rd and 4th September**, your child **must return to school** and will come for a morning or afternoon session on these days. This will allow us to split each class into two halves, giving children the opportunity to return in a smaller setting and will give teachers a better opportunity of deciding what support children are likely to need. They will work on catch up lessons in maths, reading, writing and phonics.

From Monday 7th September, children will return to school for the full school day in their class groups (no more than 30 per class and in many cases fewer children than this).

It is VERY important that your children complete the 3 half days on 2nd 3rd and 4th September. These are mandatory schooling days. (Your child's school will contact you to let you know whether your child should attend morning or afternoon).

Many children will have fallen behind a little during the time they have been out of school and will need additional work to help them catch up. They may also be anxious about socialising again with their friends. This is normal and school understand this. When children return to school, they will have a series of 'catch up' lessons in maths, phonics and reading to remind them of previous learning. They will also have lessons around re-building friendships and working together as well as the opportunity to talk about their anxieties and feelings during lockdown. Some children may find it hard to get back into learning and the 'rules' of school. Staff understand this and some children may need additional support. We will work closely with you and your children during this time. If you have any concerns, please contact your schools headteacher.

Each headteacher will work with the class teacher and some children who need additional work will be invited to attend before and after school sessions with special intervention teachers. These lessons will be one to one or small groups (no more than 3 children) for a short time before and after school. You will receive a letter from your child's school if your child is required to attend the catch up sessions. So far, we have employed an additional 3 full time teachers to provide one to one and small group support.

We will **not be running Breakfast or After School Clubs at any of our schools** before the October half term. We will review the situation for the second half of the Autumn Term.

This is because we wish to minimise children mixing between bubbles and we will be utilising our staff to provide small group, catch up and homework clubs (especially where children cannot access the google classroom at home).

The online Google Classrooms have been a massive success and as a result, many children will not have fallen behind at all. We will continue to use the Google Classrooms to set short homework tasks to help the children consolidate what they are taught at school. If your child is set homework, it is important that you work with us and encourage them to do the work. (Where internet/devices are not available, the children will receive paper copies of work). Teachers will continue to support children via Google Classroom if necessary to help children go back over anything they did not understand.

We really appreciate how much families have supported the work so far either in Google Classroom or on paper. We know that this has not always been easy. If we continue to work together in this way not only will your children catch up rapidly, but also many of them will be further ahead than they would have been if Lockdown had not happened.

If you have any concerns please contact your child's headteacher or myself christina@thehearteducastiontrust.co.uk. We know that this is an anxious time for families, children and indeed school staff but if we work together, we can make your child's return to school a safe and happy experience.

Yours sincerely



Christina Kenna, CEO

The HEART Education Trust