

Dear parents and carers

These are unprecedented times. It is unusual for the Cathedral Schools Trust Board to write to you directly but the Board feels that at this moment we should communicate with you on our thoughts and plans to reopen CST Schools and enable the gradual return of our pupils. The trustees and Central Team are communicating regularly with Headteachers and Governing Bodies of all our individual schools.

As you will no doubt be aware, the government has announced its intention for schools to open to children in Nursery, Reception, Year 1 and Year 6 from 1st June 2020 at the earliest in smaller class sizes of no more than 15 children. For your reassurance, Cathedral Schools Trust are determined to take a cautious approach and are likely to start with a phased and slow return giving schools and staff sufficient time to prepare. There are clearly already detailed discussions going on with Headteachers about how, and when, we will begin to move back into school learning. We will undertake a rigorous risk assessment in all our schools to satisfy ourselves that we can use the Government advice to protect the health and safety of our staff and children. The trust has engaged specialists to work alongside us in this crucial work. Schools will be preparing more detailed information for you over the coming days and weeks.

Providing risk assessments allow, our aim is to remain open to key worker and 'vulnerable' children during half term and from Monday 1st to Thursday 4th June. On Friday the 5th and Monday the 8th June, we will be closed for these groups of children to allow the schools to complete a deep clean of the building and undertake staff training on site. We will be using the week beginning 1st June so that schools are ready to accept all primary children with an intent to begin some form of provision from Tuesday 9th June, dependent on the risk assessments, initially with Year 6 only. We will look to increase our provision with reception, year one and nursery over the following days. In a time of huge uncertainty I recognise the need for clarity and consistency, however, it is likely that our response will have to adapt as we move forward.

Secondary school Headteachers are meeting this week to consider carefully a phased return, initially for Years 10 and 12. Again, Headteachers will communicate with you over the coming days and weeks to discuss how our schools return. There are currently no ambitions from the government about a return for students in years 7, 8 and 9. However we have also been asked to consider how children from Years 2-5 may access school before the summer holidays.

We appreciate that the decision as to whether you wish your child to attend school rests with parents. The government is strongly encouraging children and young people in the eligible year groups and priority groups (such as children of key workers) in all year groups to attend, unless they are self-isolating or there are other reasons for absence (such as shielding due to health conditions). In addition, if a child lives in a household with someone who is 'extremely clinically vulnerable' and in the shielding category, our advice is that they



continue with home learning as children in Reception and Year 1 in particular are less able to understand and follow instructions and therefore we cannot guarantee stringent social distancing. Attendance in school during term 6 is not compulsory and our proposals need to be viewed as an offer – each family must decide what is right for them.

All of our schools are different and will produce a bespoke timetable achievable within their context. They are likely to put in place a staggered start and end of the day. It will not surprise you to hear that we will be operating on reduced staffing capacity as we still have staff who are shielding, self-isolating or unable to attend for other reasons because of the current set of circumstances. In the same way that many of you will be anxious and possibly even fearful about schools re-opening, understandably some of our staff feel the same way. We need to maintain their confidence as well as yours as we start to return to school-based learning. Clearly, we will also need staffing capacity to provide home learning for those who will not be in school during term 6. We have commissioned the views of staff via a questionnaire and understand that many of you have written to Headteachers expressing your concerns and with gratitude for the work that has already taken place.

We know that many families will be anxious or uncertain about returning to school from the start of June and may think it is too soon. We also know that other families need in-school provision as soon as possible in order to be able to return to work routines. We are viewing this as the first stage in preparing for a new “normal” for schools, the next stage of which will be from September. Because the Government announcements about re-opening schools are provisional at this stage, your Headteachers we will be in touch with further details before the 8th June. If infection rates were to increase in the South West, that would affect our ability to re-open too.

As we head towards moving back into our schools we want to make sure that we have done all that we can to enable our staff and children to feel safe and supported. The situation is likely to change and we will keep you informed as it does.

Thank you for all your support.



Neil Blundell
CEO



Stephen Parsons
Chair of Trustees