



3 November 2020

Dear Parents and Carers

We have been watching with interest the unfolding events surrounding the coronavirus pandemic. As you will know, the government has now announced a further lockdown for England from 5 November but has clearly stated that all schools will remain open during this period. As a trust, we employed our own independent specialist consultant to support our safe return to school at the start of the autumn term and this included site visits and individualised advice for each school setting. All of our risk assessments were reviewed by the board of trustees and local governing bodies, staff were consulted via unions and senior leaders had to work hard to make the necessary adjustments. With the announcement over the weekend, we will continue to review the guidance documents and our Headteachers will update school risk assessments and policies accordingly.

As the school year has developed we have adapted our approaches, tightening our procedures to coincide with the developing number of cases and worsening local context. Alongside many other schools across Bristol and the UK we experienced our first positive cases (mainly in secondary schools) during October and these have increased over the last two weeks. Following each positive case we are asked to contact Public Health England and the Department for Education who support schools to respond appropriately. The initial secondary school advice from PHE was that schools should close a year group bubble in response to every positive case. Over recent days this advice has changed and it is clear that schools are being asked to only ask students and staff who have been identified as close contacts to self isolate. Some schools have closed individual classes and some have asked smaller numbers of students to self isolate depending on the individual context of the positive case. Thus far, we have taken a cautious approach consistently closing whole year groups.

However, we are aware that requesting large groups of children to self isolate makes life challenging for parents and carers and risks damaging the long term education of children. In addition, all of our schools have a set of unique circumstances and each Headteacher needs to take into consideration the individual school setting including the phase (primary or secondary) school layout, transport, population density and staffing capacity. As you can imagine schools need staff to be able to work effectively, as teachers and support workers are forced to self isolate, Headteachers need to consider whether it is possible or safe to open fully. You will appreciate that it is a fine balance and one that is constantly reviewed between the Headteachers, central trust team and trustees.

We also hope that you can appreciate the challenges the school system faces during these difficult times. As the infection rates rise across our region, and before any impact of the national lockdown will be felt, it is highly likely that the number of cases within our schools will increase dramatically. Please be reassured that we are doing all we can to ensure the safety of staff and students and the continuing education of our children. This is of course a partnership between schools and families and you can support us by ensuring that, wherever possible, you encourage your child to maintain social distancing and safe practices outside of school and when travelling to and from school sites, in line with the new national lockdown requirements. **Please remember to keep your child at home if they, or someone in their household, are displaying symptoms of coronavirus and book a test as soon as possible. We also kindly ask that you do not visit school sites unless absolutely necessary and by appointment only.**

Thank you again for all your support in keeping our schools as safe as possible and thank you to those who responded to the parent/carer questionnaire that was sent out before half-term. We had an overwhelming response with over 790 replies and were particularly pleased by the positive responses to the questions about your children feeling happy and safe at school and finding it easy to settle back into school after the lockdown period. We are very grateful for all that you have done and know will continue to do over the coming months.

For Term 2 we are considering a number of adjustments at St Katherine's as part of our 'tightening up together' approach

- Extra curricular activities beyond the school day are to be reviewed as part of our P0 and P6 provision
- All meetings with families will be virtual where possible
- Sixth Form students can leave after their last lesson each day. Students using the school bus can use both quiet study areas within the sixth form
- Class by class release at break and lunch to support spacing between students
- PE lessons to use outside space (weather permitting) to reduce risk with tightly controlled arrangements in place for the changing rooms

Reminder to all parents/carers

- To minimise contact with individuals who are unwell, if your child is showing symptoms of coronavirus or you have someone in your household who is, your child should not be in school. They must stay at home.
- Each positive case within our St Katherine's Community will continue to be communicated to all parents/carers. A reminder for us all to stick to the facts surrounding any cases and should you wish to clarify anything please do not hesitate to contact the school.

Term 1 was successful in many ways for us as a community, despite the positive cases towards the end of term and some year groups switching to Learning@Home. Whilst we will endeavour to minimise the impact of COVID 19 during Term 2, we will continue to be guided by our risk assessment, Public Health England and the DfE. Our risk assessment and operating procedures will be reviewed each fortnight or in light of any updated guidance.

We are always keen to hear your feedback and please share this using this [form](#).

Thank you for your continued cooperation.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Neil Blundell".

Neil Blundell  
Executive Principal, Cathedral Schools Trust

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Justin Humphreys".

Justin Humphreys  
Headteacher