

21st May, 2020

Dear Parents/Carers,

You will be aware the Government has announced a desire for a number of children in primary schools to return to school after what would have been half term. They also have asked secondary schools to provide some face to face support for students in Years 10 and 12. Your child's Headteacher will have already contacted you if you have a child in Nursery, Reception, Year 1 or Year 6 to gather your views on these plans and ask if you wish your child to return to school at some point after half term.

Children in Years 7, 8 and 9 are highly unlikely to return to school before September, unless they fall within the vulnerable or children of Key Worker group. The Government has said that it would like other primary aged children – those in Years 2, 3, 4 and 5 to attend school before the end of July but I would like to flag that it is unlikely that we will be able to bring these year groups back under the present 2-metre social distancing and Health and Safety restrictions.

For many of you who have children in the target year groups (Nursery, Reception, 1, 6, 10 and 12), your decision over whether or not your child will attend school in June will depend on a variety of different factors, not least whether you feel confident that your child will be safe in school.

If you decide not to send your child back, this will NOT count against your child in terms of their attendance record.

The Department for Education has released multiple guidance documents which describe the arrangements that they expect us to make to mitigate the risk of mixing children, young people and adults in schools. As some of this guidance is not particularly clear, I wanted to write to you to let you know how the Headteachers and The Dartmoor Multi Academy Trust are working together to make sense of the guidance and ensure that if and when more children do return to school, they are as safe as we can possibly make them. Alongside this, of course, we are also working to minimise the risk to staff in school.

Firstly, I would like to reassure you that no school will open to more children or young people if the Headteachers do not feel that it is reasonably safe to do so. We are currently completing thorough risk assessments which take account of issues such as social distancing, staggered start and finish times, minimising contact between different groups, cleaning and hygiene measures, use of toilets, break and lunch times and the use of PPE if staff and students/children become unwell or are injured.

When these risk assessments are completed and scrutinised, we will take them together with our proposals for extending opening to the Board of Trustees who oversee the schools. They have the responsibility of deciding whether to give the 'go ahead' on a school by school basis.

CEO | Mr Daryll Chapman
VICE CEO | Mrs Hazel Fox
CHIEF FINANCE & OPERATIONS OFFICER | Susanne Kiff

“ To provide the highest possible quality of education for all local children, in order to ensure pupils from all backgrounds are able to succeed. ”



It is important to explain that for groups of returning children, school will be very different to how it was when they left. Some key differences will be:

- Children will be in much smaller groups – size will be determined by considering the maximum number that can be accommodated in each room whilst ensuring the 2-metre social distancing is maintained. Students will not have the opportunity to mix with children in other groups.
- Social distancing – especially for older pupils will be strictly enforced. Younger children will be encouraged to socially distance as much as possible.
- Social distancing will also operate for parents and carers.
- Children and young people may not be with their usual teachers. There may be times when they are with Teaching Assistants for example.
- Classrooms will be cleaned regularly, and surfaces wiped frequently throughout the day. Older children may be asked to wipe their own surfaces themselves.
- Hygiene measures and personal hygiene will be a high priority.
- Start and finish times could be slightly different for different groups – as will break and lunchtimes.
- All children to bring a packed lunch in a sealed container. We will continue to distribute the food hampers which we have been doing for the last 9 weeks (thank you to all of you for all your lovely messages and comments, they have been much appreciated) but we will look to change some of the food produce to allow for packed lunches to be put together more easily.
- The curriculum will be very different: teachers will plan lessons or face to face sessions carefully to determine what learning has taken place during the period of lockdown and prioritise next steps.
- We encourage the wearing of school uniform which is relatively easy to launder on a regular basis. However, we fully understand that some children may have outgrown their uniforms and you have been unable to source new items. Also, we would ask that you wash your child's clothing as often as possible as this is another strategy that could potentially reduce further, any risk of cross contamination. If you are unable to send your child in in full uniform, could I respectfully ask that you try to get as close as possible to the uniform requirements of your child's school. Thank you.
- The behaviour policy will be amended to take account of the rules around social distancing and safe behaviour.

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When plans are more complete and have been assessed, Headteachers will write to you again with some specific detail in terms of the exact arrangements for your school. This will include start and finish times and other information about what to expect, as well as the measures that have been taken to protect staff and students.

Schools will decide on the groups that children and young people will be in and will try to take account of siblings and friendship groups but will not be able to swap pupils in and out of groups. Each group will become its own “bubble” and there will be no opportunity to mix bubbles.

It is entirely your decision whether to indicate that you would like your child to return, but I must emphasise that our schools will be very restricted as to how many students we will be able to accommodate whilst observing all of our safety measures. We therefore cannot guarantee places, even if you have indicated a desire for your child to return so apologies if you find yourself in this position.

If you decide not to seek placement, it will not have any negative impact on your relationship with the school, your child’s attendance record or their future opportunities.

If you do decide to take up the offer of a place in June, we may send home an amended home school agreement for you to sign to confirm that you know and agree with the changed expectations of children and young people.

For children and young people who do not return to school before the summer, we will try to continue to set work remotely.

I would like to thank you whole-heartedly for your continued faith in, and support of, our schools and the staff who have continued to work tirelessly for your children. The Headteachers have shown exceptional leadership over the last few months and are desperate to return to normality and welcome all of your children back into school as soon as is safely and logistically possible.

I ask that you bear with us as we make our plans and be understanding of us not being able to take your child back if the numbers and requests make it impossible for us to do so from a Health and Safety perspective.

We are mindful that everything could change over the next few weeks as I believe the Department for Education will be reviewing and updating its guidance later this month. We will therefore keep in touch as plans become clearer and of course as things change.

In the meantime, I would like to pass on my warmest wishes to all of you and your families at this time.

Yours sincerely,

Daryll Chapman
Chief Executive Officer
Dartmoor Multi Academy Trust

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