

Friday 5th June 2020

Dear Parents and Carers,

Since the Government's announcement about the wider opening of schools and the publication of the guidance for secondary schools, the Trust has been working collaboratively with School Leaders to develop a plan to support the ambition of offering some face-to-face provision for students in years ten and twelve from 15th June 2020.

We have developed our plan to cover the two weeks commencing 15th June 2020. The plan is therefore subject to review based on our experiences during this time, and any further guidance or evidence that becomes available before 29th June 2020.

During this initial phase, we have purposely planned for a cautious, measured and balanced approach which is aimed at minimising risk. As a result, some aspects of our plan do not go as far as the Department for Education may expect us to. However, we are confident that this is the right thing to do, ensuring that the safety of our students, colleagues and our communities remains our priority. Where evidence observed during this first two weeks suggests we can go further, we will consider opportunities to do this in partnership with you.

A copy of our plan and guide for parents and carers can be found at [https://consilium-at.com/docs/letters/Wider Reopening Plan - Guide for Parents and Carers.pdf](https://consilium-at.com/docs/letters/Wider_Reopening_Plan_-_Guide_for_Parents_and_Carers.pdf). Within each school, this plan is supplemented by a full risk assessment which has been approved by the Trust. Staff in all schools across the Trust have been putting measures in place to ensure our buildings are ready to welcome more students in a way that ensures our communities remain safe. The plan includes full details of:

- The provision on offer for students and arrangements for attendance
- Uniform arrangements
- Organisation of classrooms and arrangements in place to support safe movement around school
- Hygiene and PPE considerations
- Catering and cleaning arrangements
- Expectations of students during this period
- Actions that will be taken if a student or colleague suffers symptoms of Covid-19

Provision on Offer

Details of the provision we intend to offer for students in year ten are set out in the plan. Separate information will be issued by schools regarding the provision for any students in year twelve.

We have designed our provision in a way that minimises the risks of transmission by preventing groups of students from mixing with each other. During this initial two-week period, students will only receive provision in English, Maths and Science as part of a single teaching group no larger than ten students. Options subjects will continue to be delivered remotely, and we will consider how we will offer face-to-face contact for these subjects as part of our plans from 29th June 2020.

We have also taken a series of other steps to minimise transmission, including ending the school day for students in these year groups before lunch and staggering the times of arrival and dismissal. I am confident that these measures will help us to ensure that risks are minimised, but we will evaluate their effectiveness and make any changes necessary.

The Department for Education has been clear that remote learning will be the predominant method of educating students in all year groups, including years ten and twelve for the foreseeable future. Our staff remain focussed on continuing to develop our remote learning offer, and the Trust will also continue to support this.

We will also maintain our existing arrangements for supporting the wellbeing of students through weekly phone calls (if they are not otherwise attending school). I have received messages from many parents and carers telling me how much they have valued this.

Vulnerable Students and Children of Key Workers

As it stands, only a relatively small proportion of students eligible under these two categories are accessing the provision on offer to them following the Government's position at the start of the pandemic asking parents to keep students at home if they can.

Students within these cohorts are now being encouraged to attend school and access the provision on offer, and given the wider opening of schools we may begin to see an increase in attendance from these students.

Attendance Arrangements

Any student suffering any symptoms of Covid-19 (or who is in a household with somebody displaying symptoms) must self-isolate in accordance with Government guidance and must not attend school.

Our schools are looking forward to the opportunity to see more of our students face-to-face, and we would encourage all students who are eligible to attend school. However, we also recognise that some parents and carers may not currently feel sufficiently re-assured to allow their children to return to school at this stage. If you have any concerns, please do not hesitate to contact your school to talk about them.

Ultimately, please be assured that until further guidance is issued by Government, the Trust will respect the right of parents to choose whether or not they consider it safe to send their child to school to receive the provision on offer. No penalties will be enforced for non-attendance during this period, and any absences will be authorised.

Expectations of Students

It will be critical that students follow the social distancing and hygiene measures that our schools have implemented to keep our schools safe. It is equally important that they also follow the Government's social distance guidelines outside of school. Can I please ask you all to take the opportunity to read the section of the plan that sets out these guidelines, and to spend some time discussing them your child(ren) to ensure they understand the importance of this.

I am confident that all of our students will respond positively to these measures, recognising that they are there for their safety. Unfortunately, any student who is unable to follow the guidelines in place will not be eligible to continue accessing the provision on offer due to the health and safety risk to themselves and the wider school community.

Students not Currently Eligible to Attend School

I recognise that some parents, carers and students may be frustrated that access to school continues to be limited to certain groups of students only. All of our schools and colleagues share this frustration, and desperately want to see a return to school for all students, as soon as it is safe to do so.

Please be assured that, in the meantime, all of our students continue to be equally important to us, and we will continue to do everything we can to maximise the learning opportunities for students in all year groups, whilst also supporting their health and wellbeing.

We will be spending some time next week considering how we can continue to improve the offer for students continuing to learn from home, and you have my absolute commitment that, however long this goes on for, we will continuously seek every opportunity to increase the levels of support we are able to provide to our students.

Please feel free to write to me at contact@consilium-at.com if there is anything further you think the Trust can do to support at this time.

I hope this letter has provided some additional clarity on our next steps. Your Headteacher will be in contact over the coming days to provide further details around the specific arrangements for your schools. I have also included answers to some frequently asked questions at the end of this letter which will provide some further information.

Thank you once again for your ongoing support for our schools. It is both inspiring and humbling to see our communities support each other and caring for each other during this challenging period.

Very best wishes

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'DCL', with a stylized flourish at the end.

David Clayton
Chief Executive

Frequently Asked Questions

Should students who are clinically vulnerable return to school if they are eligible?

Students who are extremely clinically vulnerable or who live with somebody who is extremely clinically vulnerable (i.e. those who have received a letter instructing them to engage in social shielding) must not return to school.

Students who are clinically vulnerable (but not extremely clinically vulnerable), or who live with somebody who is clinically vulnerable should seek their own medical advice regarding whether it would be appropriate for them to return to school. The Trust will support Parents and Carers to make a decision that think is appropriate in the circumstances and nobody will be penalised for deciding not to attend at this stage.

What advice does the Trust have for Black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) students who are anxious about returning to school due to the potential additional risks?

Whilst the DfE guidance does not highlight additional risks to BAME students, the Trust recognises that some students, parents and carers may have additional anxieties based on their ethnicity. Schools will be supportive and sympathetic to these concerns, and will seek to address these concerns on an individual basis. Ultimately, the Trust will support Parents and Carers to make a decision that they think is appropriate in the circumstances and nobody will be penalised for deciding not to attend at this stage.

What should students do who have to travel to school on public transport?

The Government continues to update its guidance on the safe use of public transport. Students are encouraged to walk or cycle to school wherever possible, or to be driven by a member of their household if this is possible. The most up-to-date version of the Government's guidance can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-safer-travel-guidance-for-passengers>

Parents and Carers should contact their school if they need any further support.

Are students allowed to wear face masks if this makes them feel less anxious?

Current guidance states that students will not need to wear masks in school given the low risk of contracting the virus. However, any student who wants to wear their own mask will be supported to do so. Members of staff have also been informed that, whilst guidance does not suggest it to be necessary, if they wish to wear a mask for work they will also be supported in doing so.

Unfortunately, we will not be able to provide school stocks of PPE for this purpose, as these stocks must be protected for situations where PPE is required.

How will schools deal with a suspected case of Covid-19?

Our Wider Opening Plan sets out full details of our approach to dealing with this situation. Where a suspected or confirmed case of Covid-19 occurs within school, the Trust will take every step possible to support all of those potentially at risk.

Will pupil equipment be provided by the school?

Yes, school will provide a basic pack of stationery and an exercise book. This will not be shared and books will not be collected for marking.

What provision will be in place for students in year twelve?

Where relevant, schools will communicate separately regarding the provision for students in year twelve. However, in order to minimise transmission risks, it is likely that this provision will be limited to one-to-one meetings with sixth form leaders to discuss their progress and any pastoral needs that they have.

How long are these arrangements likely to be in place for?

At the moment, we have not received any guidance suggesting when it will be safe for all students to return to school. However, whilst hoping that this will be soon, we are also preparing for some of these measures to continue in to the Autumn term. As a result, we will continue to invest time in developing our provision for those students who are learning remotely a maximise the quality of their education.

Where can I find more information about the wider opening of schools?

The Government has published guidance for parents and carers which can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/closure-of-educational-settings-information-for-parents-and-carers/reopening-schools-and-other-educational-settings-from-1-june>