



The Consortium Trust

Where together excellence and pupils thrive

Weekly Staff briefing

22nd May 2020

Dear Colleagues

I hope that you are all well and it goes without saying, but, thank you again for your efforts over the past nine weeks, probably the strangest time for a school (never mind our own lives and the country) ever! What is important is that we continue to work collectively and in the spirit of public service to carry out the charitable and social objectives of our organisation. Namely the education of children and the communities that we serve. There is no getting away from the fact that this is our job but also that our job has been fundamentally changed – at least for the foreseeable future. What will test us all is how we rise to and meet the challenges ahead.

I do not subscribe to the position that we are all in the same boat, yes we are all in this crisis together and it has and will continue to affect us all. So while we all navigate the same storm, we are in very different boats and it is essential that I as the CEO of our Trust recognise that. My experience, here, working from home and at the Trust empty offices is very different to those of you that have been working at our education centres and again different to those of you that have been unable to return to the physical school building so far. If we all do our part, recognise each other's concerns and believe that everyone is doing the most and the best that they can, we will emerge from this experience much stronger than we entered it. I promise you that [we] are doing everything possible to balance the conflicting priorities of supporting the national effort to re-open our schools, while only doing so when we believe it is safe and right to do so.

Half term means half term, I am committed to your well-being and while we will not all be able to agree on everything and in the near future I am suspect that there will need to be some difficult conversations with individuals. I do want to make is very clear that, half term means half term. All school based staff including Academy Heads, should not be working (or very minimally) over the coming week. I appreciate that there is some work to be done around getting our school sites ready for 2nd June, but I do not require or expect colleagues to be working over the half term. You have rightly earned and deserve a break – please take it. Many in the Central team including our caretaking team will be working to prepare the schools, if you need to talk we are here for you.

Staff survey, I would like to thank the vast majority of you that returned your survey form earlier this week, I was touched by your honesty, reflection and overwhelming positive reaction to get our schools open again. I have read every contribution and these have now been passed onto the relevant Academy Head to discuss with you further.

The survey demonstrated that there are enough staff available and willing to work, and with the detailed risk assessments that have been undertaken at each school and the pupil registers we are in a position to confirm that all 11 schools can open on the 2nd June, should the government confirm that the 'five tests' have been met.

All members of staff based on your returns have been allocated to one of four bands.

RED: Staff that have a letter from the NHS that confirms that they are 'clinically **extremely** vulnerable' and that they are required to shield. You must ensure that you supply a copy of this letter for your staff file. These staff will continue to work from home and will join our new Trust Wide 'Virtual School' staff team.

GREEN: Staff that have identified (or not provided comment to the contrary) that they have no underlying issues that would prevent them to attend a school setting. Therefore they will be expected to attend work from the 1st June.

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Principal & CEO: Andrew Aalders-Dunthorne. Email: principal@consortiumacademy.org



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- AMBER:** Staff that have identified that they have either an underlining health issue, which is NOT classified as 'clinically **extremely** vulnerable', moderate to high anxiety or other potential barrier. But have confirmed that they wish to return to work. Your Academy Head or Line Manager will be in touch to discuss with you the route back to work and hopefully address your concerns.
- PINK:** Staff that have identified that they have either an underlining health issue, which is NOT classified as 'clinically **extremely** vulnerable', moderate to high anxiety or other potential barrier (including childcare). And have stated that they do not wish to return to work. I must stress that we are applying the same fair criteria to all staff and as we move through this phase all staff will be expected to be work ready, in the coming weeks. We also want to be compassionate to individual needs. Where we can allocate to the Virtual School staff team we will, we will discuss your concerns with you and attempt to address them. Should you refuse to return to work or engage in the professional dialogue I reserve the right to place you on unpaid compassionate leave.

The Trust has taken legal advice on these matters we are working with the Confederation of School Trusts and *brownejacobson*, education advisors and I have asked all Academy Heads and Line Managers to use the attached staffing decision flowchart. With the following principles in mind:

1. Fair and transparent to everyone.
2. Only to bring staff on to site when pupil numbers require it.
3. Be compassionate to individual requests, including the use of unpaid compassionate leave.
4. For all to understand that we must be work ready and available to meet our charitable/social aims asap.
5. We are all responsible for each other's health, safety and well-being

Virtual School, part of our offer going forward will the opening of the Consortium Trust's Virtual School, this provision will provide learning opportunities and resources for all our pupils that are unable to attend our school sites. This will replace our existing google-classroom offer and Academy Heads will explain the implication on teachers. Our aim is to spread the workload more equally to colleagues. The Virtual school will be headed up by Tamsin Little, Director of Primary Education and she will be building a team of virtually available teachers and teaching assistants.

PD day, on Monday the 1st June we will be holding a PD day for all staff. Academy Heads will confirm the arrangements for this day. Not all staff will be required attend in person, but everyone will be REQUIRED to dial in. Failure to attend (physically or virtually) the PD briefing on Covid-19 health and safety is a serious breach of contract and will result in a deduction of a day's pay. This is for all colleagues no matter of your working days/hours, your Academy Head will confirm the time of the briefing, if this causes you a significant issue please discuss urgently with your Academy Head. The PD day will also give an opportunity for staff in schools to make the necessary arrangements in the school building, again this will be directed by the Academy Head.

Your safety, the safety of everyone but particularly our staff is fundamental to us moving forward to extend our physical provision to more children, I can confirm the following:

1. Full risk assessments have been undertaken at every site and the Academy Head has confirmed they are content to open.
2. I am engaging with our Joint Consultative Committee and Unions, while there may be disagreements, the position of the Trust and the Unions have been made clear.
3. PPE equipment have been sourced and will be in place at all sites prior to the 2nd June. PPE equipment is available and must be used in line with the DfE guidance.
4. Addendum to key policies have been made, and the attached addendum (in draft) to the Behaviour and Inclusion policy make it clear that pupils that are unable or unwilling to comply with the social distancing rules will be refused entry to the school. I hope that this demonstrates that I have listened to staff concerns.

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Please refer to the national guidance documents below, for further information

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/actions-for-educational-and-childcare-settings-to-prepare-for-wider-opening-from-1-june-2020>

Guidance on implementing protective measures in education and childcare settings can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-implementing-protective-measures-in-education-and-childcare-settings>

Guidance for parents and carers as schools and other education settings in England open to more children and young people can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/closure-of-educational-settings-information-for-parents-and-carers>

I stress again that it is not absolutely certain that the re-booting of the school system will commence on the 1st June. There is apparently a leaked report from 'SAGE' today that appears to indicate that the 5 tests may not have been met and therefore shedding some doubt on the government's aspirations to extended provision. This is rumour at this point, but demonstrates the unknown and fast moving nature of the world we are working in at the moment.

We all need to prepare ourselves physically and mentally for the period ahead. If you have concerns or wish to discuss something, please discuss with your Academy Heads or Line Managers. I am also happy to take any comments directly. I am hugely grateful for your continued support and determination.

Yours sincerely

Andrew Aalders-Dunthorne
CEO & Principal

Cc: Trust Board and Members–
Locality Committee members



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DRAFT and subject to Trust Board Approval

Behaviour and Inclusion Policy Addendum

COVID-19 response

1. The following addendum to the Trust's Behaviour and Inclusion Policy will come into force on the 1st June 2020 and will remain in place until the end of the Covid-19 pandemic or when revoked by the Trust Board (whenever soonest).
2. The addendum will be reviewed by the CEO and the Executive Team routinely and will make recommendations to retain or revoke based on the evidence and need in our schools.
3. The health, safety and well-being of all our pupils, families and staff is our highest priority and the Trust reserves the right to balance the needs of the individual and the school community.
4. The Trust reaffirms its commitment to inclusion and safeguarding for all pupils.
5. The Trust and our schools have undertaken detailed risk assessments on the re-opening our schools to more pupils, from the 1st June 2020 *at the earliest*.
6. A decision to apply the sanctions as laid out in this addendum is delegated to the Academy Head in consultation with the Director of Primary Education.
7. A decision to apply the sanctions as laid out in this addendum must be supported by a detailed assessment of risk, undertaken by the Academy Head to show that all steps have been considered and that the risk to the individual, other pupils and staff cannot be managed effectively to an acceptable level.
8. **Any pupil who commits serious or persistent breach of the new COVID-19 protection rules may be sanctioned by the Academy Head using the full range of sanctions available, dependent on the seriousness of the breach, up to and including withdrawal of the offer of a place at the school for a specified period and in extreme cases permanent exclusion.**
9. A serious or persistent breach of the new COVID-19 rules may include, but not limited to:
 - Failing to comply with social distancing;
 - Failing to comply with hand-washing and hygiene requirement;
 - Failing to observe all reasonable instructions from staff;
10. In the event of a pupil having a physical school place withdrawn or a fixed-term or permanent exclusion the pupil will be auto-enrolled in the Trust's Virtual School. Until a time where the pupil can return to school, the Trust Board revokes this addendum or the COVID-19 response is no longer required as directed by the Government.

Addendum Author: Andrew Aalders-Dunthorne, CEO/Principal. 21st May 2020

Agreed by special resolution: Trust Board Meeting, 28th May 2020 (tbc)

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