



The Consortium Trust

Where together excellence and pupils thrive

Staff briefing from the CEO

17th July 2020

Dear Colleagues

In last week's staff briefing I spoke about the opportunities and anxieties of change, I am able to outline in some detail today what the Trust's expectations will be for us all as we move into the next academic year. It is important to recognise that since March as a team we have collectively demonstrated our ability to adapt and change in a rapidly changing landscape, we have shown determination, grit and resilience probably beyond our own expectations.

As we move firmly into the recovery stage we must continue to treat each other with respect and humility, understanding that like the children that we serve we all have different starting points and our journey towards the end goal will need to be personalised. **I do this job for one reason and one reason only and that is to have a positive impact on the children that we serve.** I hope that you share my passion, it is often said that education is more than a job it is a vocation – with children having one shot at it. As we say goodbye to our Year 6 cohort, never is it more obvious of the transient passing through of children in our schools. We have an absolute duty to **ensure** that we do everything we can to make that journey through our hands as successful as possible.

We simply cannot ignore the fact that our current cohort of children have missed out, in spite of our best efforts and those of many parents that have taken up the mantle of home educators. Our current children will return in September with significant gaps, we need to consider how we 'catch up' without bowing to quick fixes and short term measures. The Trust have rejected the following:

- Narrowing the curriculum;
- Moving to a six day teaching timetable;
- Eroding the school closure periods by bringing the autumn term forward to mid-August.

As you will know the Trust set up the 'Build Back Better' working party, to look at how we can 'catch up' but also take this opportunity to be even more radical to attempt to not only catch up but to transform our Trust, championing all children no matter of background or ability and tackle some of the underlining inequality in the education system. I am very excited by what I feel we can achieve together.

There is a saying that "if you continue to do what you have always done, you will always get the same result" that is just not an option, nor would it be right. I have been working with the Build Back Better working party, consulting with unions, Locality Committee Chairs group, Executive Team, Academy Heads, Trust Board and reviewing guidance and evidence from across the educational sector. I am immensely grateful for the challenge and support from the working party. Their full report with a significant number of recommendations will be discussed at the final Trust Board meeting of the year on the 21st July and will be shared with staff in September. I truly believe that the report highlights our place as an ethical Trust placing children and families at the heart of what we do.

The key recommendation of the report, that will have the most impact positively on our pupils, but I also recognise on our staff is the change to the core school hours. **From the 1st September our school opening and closing will be aligned across the Trust, all schools will open registration at 0830 and school will end for all pupils at 1530.** The change to the school day will provide you with the additional critical contact time with children to start the process of catching up. There are further recommendations in the report that relate to a variety of other tasks and functions that will support work life balance. What is key here is that we work smarter not longer. The working party recognised that all teaching staff worked well in excess of these times and with locally agreed changes to working practices, removing some of the time hungry and low impact tasks we feel that the risk of work spread can be mitigated.

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For non-teaching staff, start and finish times along with the number of hours worked will be discussed and reviewed as we move forward into the new term. Non-teaching staff can be reassured that while a review of working hours will be driven by children need we will be looking at being as responsive as we can be to personal requests. Exact deployments will be agreed locally in September. Academy Heads will support staff during the first half term as we transition into a new system of working.

The Build Back Better working party were also very keen to address the inequality in curriculum enrichments for some children, recognising that some children are fortunate to access additional activities outside school ie, swimming, dance, music, rugby, arts and more. The Trust will be therefore introducing a FREE curriculum enrichment hour from 1530-1630 at every school site, this provision will be a mix teaching staff, every FTE will be required to support this for a planned one hour session per week. Most class teachers already run an after school club and this development will formalise the provision. It is hoped that the session will be an area of expertise or a passion of the member of staff, for example teaching Spanish, drama, tennis, outdoor learning, painting the options are endless. This will be supplemented by non-teaching staff who will be paid for the hour and external providers. The aim to be provide a rich, creative, active provision that children and their parents will value. This provision will be worked up with colleagues at local level and will be phased in and fully embedded by the end of the autumn term.

For families that require breakfast club and extended school club provision they can continue to access that where there is parental demand.

To give you a flavour of other developments to look forward to, the report further recommends:

- Move to online home learning / work;
- Considerable additional investment in CPD;
- Rolling out a tutoring programme for up to 100 children;
- Additional behavioural, social and emotional support and investment;
- Improving our well-being service and recognising that excellence comes from excellent happy staff;
- Recruiting new staff, particularly in EYFS, apprentice TAs and inclusion staff;
- Further developing the broad and balanced curriculum.

The Build Back Better working party (membership listed below), have worked hard and challenged hard, I am grateful for their openness and good will over the past few weeks.

- Mandy Fayers, Teaching Assistant, Helmingham Primary School.
- Liz Frere-Smith, Head of Service – People, Halesworth Central Office.
- Tom Hardy, Teacher, Rendlesham Primary School.
- Gail Jerman, Academy Head, Yox Valley Partnership and Trust Strategic Lead – Character Education.
- Tamsin Little, Director of Primary Education, Halesworth Central Office.
- Jo Newton, TA, The Borders Partnership.
- Caroline Richardson, Academy Head, Winterton Primary School and Head of Service for EYFS.
- Caroline Townsend, Senior Teacher, Henley Primary School.
- Joel Vaughan, Teacher, Rendlesham Primary School.
- James Vink, Senior Teacher, Waveney Valley Partnership, St Edmund's Primary School
- Dawn Carman-Jones, Chair of Trustees
- Andrew Aalders-Dunthorne, CEO and Principal, Halesworth Central Office [Chair of Working Party]

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In different news, I am delighted to report that we have been overwhelmed by the number and quality of applicants to work at our Kirkley Nursery, we have received over 30 applications many candidates with higher and further qualifications including to degree level. I will be interviewing candidates next week and will also consider whether any of the candidates could be deployed to primary schools as teaching assistants. We are exceptionally fortunate to have attracted such a strong field.

While I have attempted to give you as much information as possible before schools close for the summer, there are still many unknowns and I am awaiting news from the DfE on funding, further updates on re-opening, building projects and more. Many of the central team will be working during the school closure period and to ensure that you get the information as soon as possible I will be writing two Trust newsletters during August, these will be sent directly to your Trust email address.

As we approach the summer school closure period it is always a good opportunity to reflect on the challenges met and successes made on an individual level. It is key that we enjoy what we do and are keen to develop so we can flourish in our roles. You have truly earned the holiday period, I am grateful for your efforts and look forward to working with you next year.

Yours sincerely

Andrew Aalders-Dunthorne
CEO & Principal

Cc: Trust Board and Members
Locality Committee members