

14 May 2020



DIOCESE OF SOUTHWELL
& NOTTINGHAM

MULTI ACADEMY TRUST

Dear Parents and Carers

I am writing to you on behalf of the Diocese of Southwell and Nottingham Multi Academy Trust (SNMAT) to update you as to the re-opening of schools in the near future. I am sure that you are following the latest government announcements and I wanted to ensure that you know what academies within SNMAT are doing to prepare for this.

First of all, I would like to thank you for the support that you have shown for schools in the past seven weeks. I know that a huge number of parents (many of them key workers themselves) have made sacrifices in order that their children are looked after at home. Thank you also for supporting your children with their home learning. We know that this is not easy, and teachers have been very proud of so many of the children as they have been working at home.

The government has asked that schools plan for re-opening for specific year groups. The earliest that this will be is the 1st of June. This of course is dependent upon the country reaching the five key tests set by the government at that time, including that the rate of infection is decreasing. As you would expect, the safety of children and staff is our utmost priority. We are all very much looking forward to getting back to normal at some point in the future but – in the meantime – when we do start to re-open schooling, things will be very different to how they were in the past. We are awaiting further guidance from the government but at this moment in time, the key points that we can share with you are:

1. The government are planning for a gradual return to normality. This means that we will begin the opening process by offering some teaching to the two specifically identified year groups first. These have been identified as year 10 and year 12. More details will be provided about this further on down the line.
2. The government has not yet indicated when they expect for other year groups to return to school. In the meantime, teachers will continue to provide online learning until the government directs us to re-open for these year groups.
3. We have received guidance from the government about implementing protective measures in schools. Headteachers and their staff teams are currently using this guidance in their re-opening plans.
4. It is likely that re-opening strategies will be different in different schools. This is because each one is very different: the number of staff that are available will be a key factor, alongside such basic things such as the number of entrances and the location of toilets and hand-washing facilities.

5. It is possible that when we re-open, we will do so in a phased manner. This might mean that children in the identified year groups are offered part-time schooling in the first instance, with different start and end times for different groups. Please be assured that, where we can, we will offer full-time schooling.
6. We are aware that some parents have indicated a reluctance to send their children to school during this crisis. This is a parental choice. Whilst the government has made it clear that they are encouraging children in the stated year groups to attend, parents will not be fined for non-attendance. Headteachers will be in touch with the parents of the identified year groups in the near future to establish the number of children that will be returning as this will have a significant impact on our planning.
7. Class sizes will be limited to a maximum of 15, with smaller groupings where possible. We will be encouraging social distancing (whilst recognising that this is very difficult for the younger children) and groups will be isolated from one another to reduce the risk of transmission. This means that children will remain in their group throughout the re-opening period and will not mix socially with other groups.
8. We remain open to the children of key workers. We will apply criteria that reflect the government's guidance on this. In the same way, we remain open to pupils who are identified as being vulnerable.
9. In order for the re-opening of schools to be a success, we must all work together. This means that all children who attend a school when it re-opens must follow social distancing guidelines at home too, otherwise the risk of infection will be substantially raised for all involved. We will be issuing more guidance about this in the near future.

I realise that this is a lengthy communication; there is a great deal of work to be done between now and re-opening and I know that the government will continue to provide us with guidance. I can reassure you that we will continue to update you when our planning has moved on. In the meantime, may I wish you well on behalf of the academy trust, thank you for your ongoing support and ask that you continue to be safe.

Yours faithfully,

Chris Moodie
Chief Executive Officer
Diocese of Southwell & Nottingham Multi Academy Trust (SNMAT)