



The Arthur Terry Learning Partnership
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Richard Gill NPQH, NLE, FRSA
Chief Executive Officer (CEO)

19th May 2020

Dear Parent/Carer,

Thank you for the continued support and encouragement that you are providing both to your children and to their school. I recognise the pressure we are all under and want to reassure you that the health and well-being of us all is our priority, as is the fundamental importance of education.

Last Sunday, the Prime Minister laid out his ambition for a phased wider opening of schools no earlier than 1st June. This was followed up in additional guidance throughout the course of last week and we are expecting further guidance, explicitly around secondary provision for Year 10 and Year 12 pupils, later this week. I should be clear, however, that for pupils in Year 10 and Year 12, as explained in the guidance, remote learning will continue to be the norm for the majority of pupils. Schools are being asked to supplement this, where possible, for those pupils who need it most. They are explicit that this is not a return to full time education in a traditional school setting.

For pupils in Reception, Nursery, Year 1 and Year 6, schools are being asked to open their doors to all children in these year groups but recognise that this may not be possible. Where this is the case, schools are being asked to give priority to the youngest children.

The final guidance is expected on 28th May when the Government will review the impact of its latest measures. Only then will they be able to allow schools, or not as the case may be, to go beyond the planning stage and to start welcoming additional children and pupils into schools.

We are working through a myriad of complex, dynamic and logistical issues, as a result of the guidance received, and, at all times, are sharing and collaborating beyond our own schools both locally and nationally. That is not to say that everyone's response will be the same – it won't, recognising each other's differing contexts – but supporting others and taking on board different approaches is helpful and brings about a shared understanding and a more robust response.

We fully acknowledge and welcome the advice and guidance from the Government, but equally, it is important to recognise that the contextual differences from school to school are varied. It can offer a framework on which to base our planning but no more. The decisions on how to move forward, therefore, sits firmly with our trustees who are our legal entity. They will listen carefully to the views of all stakeholders and reflect on our ongoing rigorous planning and risk assessments. As you will appreciate, there is so much to consider and we feel it is prudent to take a cautious and measured approach that carefully builds our capacity. This has to include careful consideration of staffing available, given shielding requirements, and the availability of the supply of much needed resources to ensure we are able to maintain hygiene standards, as set out in the guidance, for the short, medium and longer term.

This planning is hugely complex and must take the individual layouts of our schools into account. With every measure we put in place, we present new risks which also need individually assessing. But, at the heart of every decision that we make will be the safety, and needs, of our children and staff. With regard to safety, we will not make any compromises or short cuts. No-one knows our schools better than your school leaders and their advice is an important voice in this planning stage.

We are prepared to continuously update and amend our arrangements as the situation changes. But, as I said earlier, we feel it is better to take a cautious approach; one that carefully balances the multiple competing demands where we are able to provide robust answers to challenges presented rather than taking risks where the answers are vague.

In my letter to you last week, I said that we could not guarantee that we would be able to offer provision to all year groups referenced by the Prime Minister in his speech. I am grateful for the feedback and support I have received from many parents despite the challenges and difficulties you have faced in the delicate balance of supporting your child with their school work and your other, sometimes competing, demands. I am now able to go a little further and provide further details as to how we intend to go about what has been asked of us.

On Friday, I spoke with the chair of our trust. He, like all of our school leaders, has supported our phased approach to the Prime Minister's announcement and it is this :

'We share the Prime Minister's ambition to open our doors to more pupils and to give priority to those year groups stated in his speech on 10th May . However, on 1st June we will continue to be open for the previously identified groups of vulnerable children and children of critical workers only, in the same way we have over recent weeks. We will work with outside agencies in trying to encourage even more pupils identified as vulnerable to attend school. But, given the rapidly changing situation, we need to be agile in our planning and therefore, we will not be opening any sooner than 15th June for the other year groups announced by the Prime Minister in his most recent speech. In addition, informed by the planning that has already been undertaken, we will not be looking to offer Year 6s full time provision if/when trustees make a decision to extend our offer. We will provide limited opportunities for Year 6 children to go in to their schools to see friends and say 'goodbye', engage in secondary related activities etc. but they will not be part of any possible future full time offer, given the reduced staffing levels that we are already aware of.'

I recognise that there may be mixed feelings about this within our communities. In order to develop the appropriate strategy, we have asked our school communities to continue their engagement with parents and staff. We value your views and can assure you that these will feed directly in to the information shared with trustees.

Our approach is broken down in to more detail in the following four phases:

Phase 1 – Monday 18th May to Friday 22nd May (this week)

Schools will continue to provide for the priority groups of children/pupils, as we have been since schools closed to most children/pupils on 20th March. We will also continue to provide work to all children/pupils as we have been to date. The ATLP executive team will continue to work alongside school leaders with careful planning, including risk assessing and any resulting implications, (including to policies, procedures and statutory requirements), plan for/make any necessary refinements in the required physical alterations to the buildings to prepare for our ambition to safely receive staff and children.

Phase 2 – Monday 25th May to Friday 29th May – Half Term

At the close of play on Friday 22nd May, all schools will stop providing work for children/pupils to complete at home so that children/pupils can enjoy their half term. There will be a reduced provision in our schools for our priority groups; headteachers have been asked to consult with parents who rely on this offer, so as to ensure that those children who are able to remain at home over the half term break, do so. We will review the latest guidance from the Government, when it is available, on or around 28th May.

Phase 3 – Week beginning Monday 1st June

We will resume setting work for home learning and we will open schools to those priority groups who have been attending school since 23rd March, which we hope will include more vulnerable children from all year groups.

We will continue to use the days that follow 1st June to continually test and risk assess our practical arrangements and their ability to safely scale up to accommodate the identified year groups. This includes staffing levels to be maintained, as expected, and the assurance regarding ongoing supplies of hygiene resources.

Having done all that, our ambition is to take the evaluation of the testing of our preparations and our arrangements to the trust board for a decision *no sooner than Thursday 11th June* on whether we can move to the next phase, Phase 4. During this period, we will continue to engage with you as part of our planning as your views, comments, suggestions and opinions will play an important role in the information to be presented to trustees.

Phase 4 – No sooner than Monday 15th June

Subject to all the available information presented to the trust board being approved (no sooner than Thursday 11th June) we will look to open for the year groups identified in the Prime Minister's announcement on Sunday 10th May. Obviously, by this point, we will have engaged with you further and will have shared our plans. Any recommendation to trustees will not be done until we are confident in our risk-assessed, safety-minded approach, based on safe staffing levels and robust health and safety protocols.

We believe this is a sensible approach to build up our total trust-wide resilience across all aspects of our work and with well-defined stages of decision making.

The Department of Education (DfE) guidance for parents and carers about the wider opening of schools can be found here:

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

Once again, thank you all for your continued support.

Yours sincerely,



Richard Gill

CEO



Lisa Dodd

Headteacher