

20th May 2020

'New Schooling Consultation'

Dear Parent/Carer,

I trust that you are all safe and well. This continues to be a particularly challenging time for all of us.

Following the Prime Minister's announcement on Sunday 10th May and the further advice on Monday 11th May, I felt it was important to update everyone with our Trust's present position regarding the current Coronavirus pandemic.

In line with many other organisations, we are currently exploring the benefits of basing all of our future plans on objective evidence. It is really important for us at this time to share our thinking and to receive your feedback on any strategy that we put in place.

I would like to make it clear that in-line with government guidelines, we are not working towards any specific timeline, but are 'working towards a phased return for more children and young people', whilst ensuring that we ***maintain and secure the health and safety of every single child, young person and member of staff***, which has been our overarching priority since closing our schools back in March. Ultimately the legal responsibility for the opening of our schools and the type of provision that our children and young people access, sits with our Board of Trustees. This will be determined following the completion of a rigorous, site specific and person centred risk assessment and through our consultation process with families and key partners.

The areas being considered by the trust at present are:

Test 1 to carefully track the numbers of Covid-19 cases in Oldham and Tameside (and other areas that may be applicable). We also need to evaluate the "R level" to ensure it is within or around 0.5-0.7.

Test 2 to be convinced that testing is available to any member of staff, where it is applicable. We also need to be assured that we have an appropriate number of suitability qualified and experienced staff members to support the young people. We will promote the initial roll out of the track and trace application for mobile phones.

Test 3 to ensure that all of our schools and organisations consult upon and instigate a clear strategy and have an implementation plan relating to social distancing. Our premises must be fit-for-purpose and we must be able to provide necessary services.

Test 4 to audit all PPE and be assured of its present and future availability. Where appropriate, staff will have access to relevant training relating to the use of PPE. All

staff, children and young people will have training and support on applicable health and hygiene techniques (ie hand washing, covering mouth when coughing etc).

Test 5 to continue safeguarding and monitoring to protect “vulnerable” staff and students. Our full commitment is to keep all our children, young people and staff safe.



Our Senior Executive Team will collect the above information for all of our schools, which will then be published on all of our social media platforms and via our websites for you to review. Recommendations will then be made to the Trustees, so that they can make informed decisions, and can consider risk by using a simple scaling system.

After an initial assessment of the 5 tests above we are planning our next steps with extreme caution. We are particularly concerned about both the high rate of infection in our local areas and the relatively high “R” rate.

What We Know

1. The risk of transmission and contracting COVID-19 remains particularly high in Oldham and Tameside (and some other GM regions).
2. The number of deaths and confirmed cases still remains high.
3. The need for clinically vulnerable people to stay at home remains.
4. The need for everyone to socially distance remains the case.

5. Some social restrictions to see your friends and family remain in place.
6. The position where all children with an EHCP being classified as 'vulnerable' has been subtly changed to state that the majority of children are still safer at home.

Special School Guidance

On Sunday 10th May, an announcement was made by the Government that stated (in mainstream schools) certain school years should return to school on the 1st June (R1, Y1, Y6). Many parental organisations and trade unions are presently disputing this position.

It's important to note that there is separate Special School Guidance that was issued on the same day stating:

“Special schools, special post-16 institutions and hospital schools should work towards welcoming back as many children and young people as can be safely catered for in their setting. They may want to prioritise attendance based on key transitions and the impact on life chances and development, and to consider creating part-time attendance rotas so that as many children as possible can benefit from attending their setting. Special settings should work with local authorities and families to ensure that decisions about attendance are informed by existing risk assessments for their children and young people, which should be kept up to date”

We believe that the Government has set out a very “narrow” view of schooling. They are assuming that schooling can only take place if a child attends a school site. We know that our acclaimed virtual learning offer, is allowing (a significant proportion of) our children and young people to continue on their learning journeys.

Pressure on Families

As you are aware we currently have a small number of young people attending schools that are children of key workers and these arrangements will continue.

I am well aware that many other families are experiencing particular challenges. The last thing we want to do is place families under more pressure. We've got to keep you, our children and staff safe.

If you believe that your child or anyone in your household is classified as extremely clinically vulnerable, you should have/ask for a shielding letter from your GP/Consultant to share with your employer to enable you to stay at home to shield that person from contracting COVID-19.

We've been made aware that many young people under the age of 18, even though they would fall into the above category, have NOT had a shielding letter. If appropriate, we would advise that you contact your GP to discuss your child's needs.

We would like to reassure you that you will NOT be fined for making an informed decision to keep your child at home due to the risks of COVID-19.

The 'New Schooling' offer

All schools in New Bridge Multi Academy Trust are amongst the leading organisations nationally, that use technology to engage and support each learner. Our learning offer is

innovative and creative and promotes high quality learning outcomes linked to EHCPs, where appropriate.

Our learners are able to access high quality learning through a person centred, appropriately differentiated curriculum.

Our “New Schooling” will allow all children and young people the opportunity to access either virtual learning, on-site learning or a combination of both. All young people engaging in the “New Schooling” offer will receive an attendance mark. We will determine how your child will be educated by carrying out a personalised risk assessment which will be informed by your child’s teachers and by other appropriate agencies where appropriate. This may include health or social care colleagues. Most importantly we want to consider your views to ensure that the safest and most appropriate provision is determined

So, what’s next?

We’d really welcome your views on everything that we have done so far with regards to the process outlined in this document. We would like to hear your thoughts on our New Schooling Offer to students and young people and to hear what your views are regarding our proposed risk assessment framework. It would be great if you were able to contribute. Co-production has never been as important.

<https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=M0yAmYaEhkiwRLDxLHOct2AbFM0MgsVPtgJpIYjUpYdURjNHQVZKvUZYUINCnkc5QktCRE5VR0RWSiQIQCN0PWcu>

We would ask that you complete this survey by Friday 22nd May 2020. Following the initial consultation with families and key partners, we will send an update to you on our progress and future plans by Friday 29th May. You may be contacted by our staff teams before this time to support us with our personalised risk assessment process.

Kind regards,

Graham Quinn
CEO New Bridge Multi Academy Trust