

3rd March 2021

Northern Star Academies Trust Schools **The Full Opening of Schools – March 2021**

Dear Parents, Carers and Families,

As you are aware the Prime Minister has set out a schedule for the gradual lifting of the National Lockdown – we hope this signals a return to normality. After experiencing a year of disruption in education we are very much looking forward to welcoming back our whole school communities and seeing our schools full of children and young people.

The first step is the return of all children to school on 8th March 2021. I would like to take the opportunity to provide you with a number of Trust updates.

I would first like to express my sincere thanks to all parents and carers for your resilience and hard work during the lockdown period. Sustaining the education of your children at home cannot be underestimated. From my personal experience, I have the upmost respect for what you have achieved and am sincerely grateful for all the positive messages and communication you have sent to your schools and child's teachers. Engagement across our partnership of schools with remote learning has been simply brilliant – children have responded well to live digital learning, home-learning packs, Teams calls, emails and telephone calls. We have plenty of wonderful examples of home-learning shared on all our school websites and our central Trust website www.nsat.org.uk

Secondly, it is important to keep in mind that we have not reached the end of the pandemic just yet. It is vitally important that we continue to adhere to the government guidance around social distancing and personal hygiene. In preparing for the return, your school's Headteachers and Business Managers have revised and updated their School Risk Assessments, and all Risk Assessments pertaining to staff and students. Each Headteacher will write to you reminding you of the safety measures that we have in place at your school and need pupils/students and parents to follow, please. In our secondary schools the wearing of masks in and around school sites, including classrooms, is mandatory and an extra precaution (*this provision will be reviewed by the Department for Education at Easter*).

In addition to the safety measures in and around our schools, our staff teams are also routinely testing for COVID-19 twice per week to ensure that we can keep our children and our colleagues as safe as possible. We want to desperately avoid closing 'bubbles' and sending children back home, so please can I urge you to be vigilant and if you or a family member are showing symptoms of COVID-19 then please self-isolate and seek a test as quickly as possible.

If pupils/students do have to self-isolate, schools continue to have a statutory duty to provide remote education, as you have experienced during this lockdown. School staff will be in touch with you to confirm arrangements for remote learning if it is required for your child.

Our schools will feel very similar to the Autumn Term with classes or year groups working in 'bubbles' and a restriction on whole school gatherings or assemblies. Please expect that some of the normal spring and summer events may not be able to proceed in their usual format. With all these matters your child's school will keep you fully informed.



At the bottom of this letter you can find links to all the relevant Department for Education Guidance for parents and carers.

Attendance expectations – we believe that it is vital for all children to return to their education setting to minimise, as far as possible, the longer term impact of the pandemic on children’s education, wellbeing and wider development. From March 8th, attendance will be mandatory in all primary schools and this means the usual rules on attendance will apply. In our secondary schools, we commence a programme of Lateral Flow Testing; whilst attendance is mandatory, secondary schools have discretion to manage the return of students (between 8th March - 12th March) in order to administer the first test prior to commencing lessons.

In all NSAT schools, Headteachers and Senior Leaders are on hand to offer advice and support on what pupils/students can be doing to prepare for their return to school and provide further information about what they are offering to support positive health and wellbeing, transitions, settling back into school routines. Please don’t hesitate to make contact with them.

Thankyou for all your support and patience. I hope that the strong relationships between home and school we have developed over the lockdown periods provide a robust foundation for many years to come as we support your child with their Primary and Secondary education.

We very much look forward to welcoming everyone back to school next week.

Yours sincerely,



Jenn Plews *Chief Executive Officer: Northern Star Academies Trust*

Department for Education: Guidance for parents and carers

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/what-parents-and-carers-need-to-know-about-early-years-providers-schools-and-colleges-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-outbreak/what-parents-need-to-know-about-early-years-providers-schools-and-colleges-during-covid-19>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-on-supporting-children-and-young-peoples-mental-health-and-wellbeing/guidance-for-parents-and-carers-on-supporting-children-and-young-peoples-mental-health-and-wellbeing-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-outbreak>