20 May 2020

Dear parent/carer,

Esteem Multi-Academy Trust is currently making plans for how we might open our academies (schools and support centres) more widely from 1 June and, in doing so, is following the guidance from the Department for Education.

As there has been considerable debate and discussion in the media and with the government regarding the decision to encourage the wider opening of schools, we thought it important for the Trust to describe how we will be approaching the process.

All Esteem academies are planning for wider opening based on the following principles:

* The safety and wellbeing of our staff and pupils is paramount. Esteem is committed to involving all our stakeholders. Therefore, academy leaders will work with their staff – and indeed parents/carers and school communities – to discuss and share plans, as they are developed.
* Planning will take account of the needs, vulnerabilities and concerns of all staff, pupils, and parents/carers.  If for any reason (for example, because an unusual number of staff are shielding, living with someone who is extremely vulnerable, or otherwise vulnerable themselves) it is not possible to implement opening in the way outlined in government guidance, then we will limit what we do to what is safe. Esteem academies will adopt a cautious, phased approach.
* Because this is a new virus, we cannot expect ‘the science’ to be able to give us all the answers. Science can tell us (tentatively and with various levels of confidence) about risks to specific groups. But it cannot tell us everything. We will be guided by the government’s scientific advisers and seek to do what is right based on the best evidence we have.
* Esteem academies are all very different and will need to take differing approaches to the phasing of wider opening and the numbers and cohorts of pupils that will be able to return. Our mainstream and alternative provision (support centre) academies will follow the government guidance related to phasing in specific year groups. Our special academies will make local decisions based on pupil risk assessments, staffing and buildings requirements and parental choices. These decisions will be explained and communicated to parents/carers.
* All Esteem academies will continue to offer places to children of essential workers and those pupils who are considered to be most vulnerable.
* Plans will be based on the hierarchy of measures recommended by the government and its scientific advisers. This is not completely without risk. But the approach that Esteem will take will be based on comprehensive risk assessments for all academies.

Your individual academy will contact you regarding the very specific arrangements they are putting in place to receive more pupils from 1 June. We understand that this may be a worrying and confusing time for families, so please contact your academy directly to discuss any issues, questions or concerns you may have regarding your child and the plans for wider opening.

On behalf of the members of the Trust Board, the Headteachers and staff of all our academies, we would like to thank you for your support, care, and patience during these most challenging and unsettling of times.

Yours faithfully

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| Kevin Dean  **Chair of Trust Board** | Julian Scholefield  **Chief Executive Officer** |