



Friday, 7 May 2020

Dear Parent/Carer

Situation Report and Forward Planning

I write to you on behalf of the Trust – the charity with the legal responsibility for the operation of the school. The question of re-opening schools is coming closer to the front of minds. I aim to share with you our thinking about the many strands of this incredibly complex situation to provide some analysis and to set out how we might address matters, going forward.

Schools are providing childcare essential to enable some parents' availability for work and for the most vulnerable young people while we await any further direction from central government about their plans for exiting lockdown. There are different, some confusing and contradictory, viewpoints on the way forward informed by competing pressures and priorities. Countries around the world are at different points in their management of the pandemic. No two sets of circumstances are the same.

In addition to the current childcare arrangements, schools also have an essential role to play in social support and learning. Reopening schools carries risk. Again, no two sets of circumstances are the same. Infection rates vary from community to community. The profile of staff vulnerability to the virus is unique to that staff body. The physical environment, and thus health and safety considerations linked to appropriate distancing, is different in each school. It is not possible, therefore, to say: *the school down the road is doing this, so the school up the road should be doing the same.*

The government have consistently said that they are listening to the science to inform decision-making at national level. The science appears to be pointing towards children being at lower risk from COVID-19 than adults. This is not the same as **no risk**. The role of children in spreading the virus remains unclear, meaning that the risk to adults either in school or back in the home is equally unclear.

No risk is not possible in any situation. Going to the shop, receiving shopping, handling or ingesting anything carries an element of risk for the entire population at large. There remains uncertainty about how the virus is spread. Coughs and sneezes are obvious modes of transmission. Droplet-laden surfaces, unwashed hands and extended close face-to-face contact are others. Indoor environments pose greater risk than outdoors.

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It is within this context that we are making decisions about the provision we offer at school. Currently, we are making provision for the children of keyworkers who have no alternative childcare arrangements and for those deemed 'most vulnerable.' Our risk mitigations already include a heightened health & safety environment, increased hygiene protocols, the fewest people possible in our schools, substantially increased time spent outdoors, increased ventilation indoors and social distancing. We are operating on a reduced workforce and are supporting learning in the main through an online offer.

Our planning takes into account:

1. Health & Safety protocols and requirements for safe operation
2. The Physical Environment of the school and its' organisation
3. Staffing considerations
4. Services required into the school and how they can be safely delivered
5. Scheduling of provision
6. Online learning provision

The situation is unprecedented. Every effort is being made to provide the most that we are able under the circumstances that we are operating. We will keep you informed of developments as they happen.

With every best wish,

Mark Wilson
Chief Executive Officer
Wellspring Academy Trust

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