

Date: 14 May 2020

Dear parents and carers

**Partial opening of Vine Trust schools on a phased basis no earlier than
1st June 2020**

At The Vine Schools Trust, we want to see our schools full and our children returning to life in all its fullness as soon as it is safe to do so. The safety of our children, families and staff is of the utmost importance to us, particularly at this challenging time.

I am sure that you have seen the Government guidance published on 11th May which outlines the expectation that schools in England will partially reopen on a phased basis from 1st June 2020. Our Vine Trust schools will be using this guidance, along with Local Authority guidance to plan for the phased reopening of our schools.

The Government have set out an ambition that:

- Children in Nursery, Reception, Year 1 and year 6 will begin a phased return to school from 1st June 2020.
- Primary schools may work towards the possibility of other year groups returning from July 2020 for the 'last month of the school year'. This will only happen if the scientific evidence indicates that it is safe to have larger numbers of children in school.
- Priority groups such as children of critical workers and vulnerable children will continue to attend school as they have done for the past weeks.

The Government recognises that children in early years and primary schools cannot be expected to remain 2 meters apart from each other and from school staff and we know that this has been taken into account when deciding to send children from certain year groups back to primary school. As a Trust, our schools will be taking the recommended steps to reduce the size of the classes, stagger drop off/pick up arrangements, as well as lunch and playtimes. Our schools will also increase the frequency of cleaning, reduce the shared resources used by our children and utilise the outdoor areas as recommended by the Government.

When making plans for the partial reopening of our schools, we will be observing the advice from the Government that outlines:



- the Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies advising the Government that it has a high degree of confidence that the severity of the disease in children is lower than that in adults and a moderately high degree of confidence that children aged up to 11 are less susceptible to it.
- all staff are already eligible for testing and staff in shielding, or high-risk groups should remain at home.
- from 1st June 2020, all children and young people eligible to return to their settings will have access to testing, if they display symptoms, as will any symptomatic member(s) of their household.
- Where a setting has a positive case, Public Health England will advise on the appropriate course of action, and the group of people with whom the infected has mixed closely with should be sent home and advised to self isolate for 14 days.

As a Trust, we will plan for the phased partial reopening of our schools but will not be implementing these plans until we hear further confirmation from the Government and the Local Authority. Should we be able to move to the start of phased partial reopening, although there will be no penalties for non-attendance, we will welcome children in our nursery, reception, year 1 and year 6 classes to attend school from 1st June 2020, or the date the Government confirms, unless a child or a family member is shielding or if the child is vulnerable due to an underlying condition.

We know that not all of our staff will be returning to school yet and we will be making sure that we have sufficient staff for the number of children that will be in school.

As a Trust, we are working together to do our best to keep our children and staff safe while following Government and Local Authority advice. We will discuss our plans fully with our staff before we move to implementation. We will be in close communication with our parents and give them as much notice as we can about when our schools will be ready to open.

Each school is currently carrying out detailed risk assessments which will inform their planning to provide provision for the children in Nursery, Reception, Year 1 and Year 6. We recognise that parents will have anxieties about this reopening of schools and we welcome your thoughts and comments. Your head teacher will be making contact to collect your views which will be taken into account as we plan to open each school.

We thank you for your patience and your support, our head teachers and school staff are working extremely hard under these unexpected conditions and always have your children at the heart of every decision they make.

The Lord is here; his Spirit is with us.
We need not fear, his spirit is with us,
We are surrounded by love, his spirit is with us,
We are immersed in peace, his spirit is with us,
We rejoice in hope, his spirit is with us,
We travel in faith; his spirit is with us.

Yours sincerely



Emma Wigmore
Chief Executive Officer
of The Diocese of Chelmsford Vine Schools Trust

