

9th July 2021

Dear Parents and Carers

First of all, I do very much hope that this communication finds you well and looking forward to the summer break.

As the country moves towards Step 4 of the government's roadmap, I feel it is important that we communicate how this will look and reassure you that the Trust will continue to follow government guidance in order to manage the spread of the virus. Step 4 marks a new phase in the government's response to the pandemic, moving away from stringent restrictions on everyone's day-to-day lives, towards advising people on how to protect themselves and others. As COVID-19 becomes a virus that we learn to live with, there is now an imperative to reduce the disruption to children and young people's education - particularly given that the direct clinical risks to children are extremely low, and every adult has been offered a first vaccine and the opportunity for two doses by mid-September. Our priority now is for academies to see out the academic year safely and in September to get back to delivering face-to-face, high quality education to all our pupils.

Step 4 and "living with the virus" will not necessarily mean a return to the way things used to be.

Risk assessments

All Waterton academies must continue to comply with health and safety law and put in place proportionate control measures. We will regularly review and update our risk assessments - treating them as 'living documents' that evolve in step with the circumstances in our academies and the public health advice.

Mixing and 'bubbles'

At Step 4 it will no longer be necessary to keep children in consistent groups ('bubbles'). If your academy is still open by the time we reach Step 4, you should know that all Waterton academies will continue with these measures until the end of the summer term. The rationale for this decision relates simply to ensuring we keep the chances of transmission to a minimum prior to the start of the holiday period. The only deviation from current procedure is that bubbles will not be collapsed as a whole, but rather individuals asked to follow the below guidance.

As from September we will make sure our outbreak management plans cover the possibility that in some local areas it may become necessary to reintroduce 'bubbles' for a temporary period. Any decision to recommend the reintroduction of 'bubbles' would not be taken lightly and would need to take account of the detrimental impact they can have on the delivery of education.

Face coverings

From Step 4, face coverings will no longer be advised for pupils, staff and visitors either in classrooms or in communal areas.

Tracing close contacts and isolation

Academies will only need to do contact tracing up to Step 4. From Step 4, close contacts will be identified via NHS Test and Trace and education settings will no longer be expected to undertake contact tracing. As with positive cases in any other setting, NHS Test and Trace will work with the positive case to identify close contacts. Contacts from a school setting will only be traced by NHS Test and Trace where the positive case specifically identifies the individual as being a close contact. This is likely to be a small number of individuals who would be most at risk of contracting COVID-19 due to the nature of the close contact. We will provide further details around this as we receive guidance from the government.

From 16 August 2021, children under the age of 18 years old will no longer be required to self-isolate if they are contacted by NHS Test and Trace as a close contact of a positive COVID-19 case. Instead, children will be contacted by NHS Test and Trace, informed they have been in close contact with a positive case and advised to take a PCR test. We would encourage all individuals to take a PCR test if advised to do so. Academies will continue to have a role in working with health protection teams in the case of a local outbreak.

Control measures

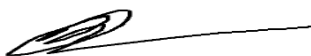
Learning to live with the virus means that all our academies will continue to:

1. Ensure good hygiene for everyone through frequent and thorough hand cleaning.
2. Maintain appropriate cleaning regimes.
3. Keep occupied spaces well ventilated.
4. Continuing to adopt the 'catch it, bin it, kill it' approach.
5. Follow public health advice on testing, self-isolation and managing confirmed cases of COVID-19.

The 'dancing on quicksand' nature of the pandemic dictates that the above guidance will probably alter slightly over the summer holiday period. The trust is operating a skeleton team over the summer and will provide all academies with guidance and relevant information so as to ensure they are well prepared for the September opening. In turn, all academies will communicate to parents and carers in a timely manner to ensure they too are likewise appropriately informed.

We must now look forward and strive to deliver the educational provision that will ensure a bright future for all our children and wider school communities. I wish you all a restful and enjoyable summer break and very much look forward to working with everyone over the coming academic year.

Yours Sincerely



Mr D Dickinson OBE
CEO
Waterton Academy Trust