



5th March 2021

Dear Parent/Carer

Almost exactly a year after the first lockdown started our children will return to school on Monday, with the hope that the disruption to their lives is coming to an end. If we did not appreciate then how important being at school is for children and young people, we certainly do now. Our schools provide more than just an academic education, they provide social contact, friendships and a sense of belonging. All these things are vital to children's health and mental wellbeing, and that of the staff who work with them. We also know that for parents this has been a really tough time, home education has been tough for many and has put additional stress on families at a very difficult time.

The staff across our schools are therefore delighted to be able to welcome back your children from Monday. We all look forward to seeing each other again and doing all we can to get back to normal as rapidly as possible. There will be a phased re-start in our secondary schools as we work to provide Lateral Flow Tests for all children as they return. This is an extra precaution on top of all the other control measures that have already been in place to prevent the virus being spread in our schools. This scale of testing has never been done before in schools and although planning has been meticulous, we hope our young people will be patient and work with us to make the process as smooth as possible. It will also be vital that we do not rely on the tests alone but continue to follow the hand washing, social distancing and good respiratory hygiene routines we have got used to over the last year. *The virus has not gone away, and we must all remain vigilant in and out of school.*

We have been working together as a Trust to prepare for reopening with our health and safety leads working with school leaders to review risk assessments and make our schools as safe as possible. These risk assessments will be reviewed by the Chair of Governors in each school before being finally signed off by the Trust. Everybody is committed to being open *and* being safe.

Public Health England and the Government now recommend that secondary age pupils wear face coverings in lessons, at least until Easter. Although inconvenient, if it makes children and staff safer, we should all do our best to comply. There is no such requirement in primary schools where the guidance states that younger children should not wear face coverings in school.

I appreciate only too well that for our young people who would have been sitting GCSE's and post 16 examinations this year, this is a worrying time. I can assure you that all is being done in our schools, under the guidance from the exam regulator, to ensure your children are awarded the appropriate grade. The most important message I would give young people now is "do not stop working and learning!" We will be doing further focused teaching and specially tailored assessment tasks to give every young person the opportunity to demonstrate what they can do. You will get more details from individual schools once the examination boards have provided all the information we need. Every young person still has the ability to influence their final grade.

ALLIANCE LEARNING TRUST TEACHER TRAINING

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School leaders in our Trust are all working to make sure we return next week ready to deliver the full curriculum in a way that will allow children to rapidly make up for lost learning time. This may include additional tutoring and intervention, but the main priority is to get children back into the classroom to benefit from good teaching every day.

This does of course depend on your child attending school every day, on time, ready with all they need for the school day. Our children's mental and educational wellbeing are best served now from being in school and resuming the familiar routines. Please do all you can to support us in this, and schools will be happy to help if you need assistance.

It has been an incredibly hard year, but Monday brings a new beginning and we need to be optimistic for the future, our optimism needs to encourage and reassure the children who need us.

Welcome back.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Richard Sheriff'. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop at the end.

Richard Sheriff
CEO – Red Kite Learning Trust