

5<sup>th</sup> November 2020

To: All parents and guardians of pupils

Dear Parent/Guardian,

### **New National Social Restrictions**

On Saturday 31<sup>st</sup> October, the Prime Minister set out his intention to ask Parliament to approve a national set of social restrictions across England, in response to the rapidly increasing rates of Covid-19 infection. Yesterday, Parliament approved the proposals. This is not the same as the social lockdown between March and July earlier in the year. This time, people will continue to go to work where their place of work is open. In addition, schools, colleges, and universities will remain open. On 2<sup>nd</sup> November, the DfE sent the following message to all schools:

*“We will continue to prioritise the wellbeing and long-term futures of our children and young people and will not be closing early years settings, schools, colleges or universities. It remains very important for children and young people to attend, to support their wellbeing and education and help working parents and guardians. Senior clinicians still advise that school is the best place for children to be, and so they should continue to go to school.” DfE 2<sup>nd</sup> November.*

Reach South Academy Trust has consistently supported this view. We are committed to keeping our schools open for all pupils as long as it is safe to do so, to support your children with their educational development and also to support you and your family in being able to work where you are still able to do so.

The social restrictions that will be in place for the next month will help us to reduce the risk of infection spread within schools. Currently, our ‘bubbles’ burst at the end of each school day when children and their families can mix with children and families from other bubbles and other schools. The new social restrictions will help to maintain the integrity of our class and year-group bubbles and hence strengthen our infection controls. We welcome that approach.

The Trust and the school has worked hard to ensure that we provide an environment that is as safe as possible for your child. The Department for Education (DfE) along with Public Health England (PHE) publish guidance that all schools must comply with to reduce the risk of infection coming into schools and spreading. You can see that guidance for yourself at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/actions-for-schools-during-the-coronavirus-outbreak/guidance-for-full-opening-schools>

Reach South takes precautions in all of its schools, which go beyond the DfE requirements, to further reduce the risk of infection spread. Our latest ‘Operational Management for Academies from 5 November’ can be read at <https://www.reachsouth.org/covid-19>. Our approach is based on a comprehensive risk assessment of all relevant aspects of school life. This approach significantly reduces the risk of infection within the school.

### **Clinically Extremely Vulnerable Children**

The government requires by law that parents send their children to school. However, for some children their doctor will have confirmed that they are still clinically extremely vulnerable to the Covid-19 infection. The advice to parents in this case from the government is:

*“More evidence has emerged that shows there is a very low risk of children becoming very unwell from coronavirus (COVID-19), even for children with existing health conditions. Most children originally identified as clinically extremely vulnerable no longer*

*need to follow original shielding advice. Parents should be advised to speak to their child's GP or specialist clinician if they have not already done so, to understand whether their child should still be classed as clinically extremely vulnerable.*

*Those children whose doctors have confirmed they are still clinically extremely vulnerable are advised not to attend education whilst the national restrictions are in place. Schools will need to make appropriate arrangements to enable them to continue their education at home.*

*Children who live with someone who is clinically extremely vulnerable, but who are not clinically extremely vulnerable themselves, should still attend education.*

*Parents of clinically extremely vulnerable children will be receiving a letter shortly confirming this advice."*

### **Face Coverings for Pupils**

The Government has introduced requirements on face coverings for pupils during the national lockdown period.

In primary schools there is no requirement for pupils to wear face coverings.

In secondary schools or for pupils in year-7 and above in all through schools, the new requirement of the government is:

*"In schools where pupils in year 7 and above are educated, face coverings should be worn by adults and pupils when moving around the premises, outside of classrooms, such as in corridors and communal areas where social distancing cannot easily be maintained.*

*Some individuals are exempt from wearing face coverings and we expect adults and pupils to be sensitive to those needs.*

*Face coverings should also be worn by pupils in year 7 and above when travelling on dedicated school transport to secondary school or college."*

We must now ask that parents/guardians of secondary aged students provide their child with a face covering to bring to school.

### **Managing Positive Cases of Covid-19**

With increasing levels of infection in the community, we expect to have a number of cases where some pupils and/or staff develop Covid-19 symptoms and some will subsequently test positive for the virus. When this happens we liaise with the DfE and local public health authorities to determine if other children and staff need to self-isolate at home for up to 14-days. We always take this decision in consultation with local public health officials. Where children have to self-isolate because they or a family member has symptoms or because they have been in close contact with someone who has tested positive, we will arrange for work to be provided to support the child's learning.

Yours sincerely,



Dean Ashton  
Chief Executive Officer