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Dear Families,

I hope this letter finds you safe and well.

I am very grateful to you for following the government's National Stay at Home, Save Lives guidance. The government tell us the social distancing has made a positive difference in reducing the spread of the virus. I appreciate all the work our schools are doing to support you at this difficult time and have been humbled by the efforts you have made to support your children with their home learning; the photographs you send into our schools are a delight for our staff to see.

On Sunday 10th May, the Prime Minister announced that providing that the R (rate of infection) remained below one, he hoped schools could start reopening from 1st June. He also stated that he hoped Nursery, Reception, Year 1 and Year 6 could start coming back into school from 1st June as part of a phased return.

Yesterday evening, Monday 11th May, further advice was published by the government and teaching unions on how schools could start to prepare for children to return

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/details-on-phased-wider-opening-of-schools-colleges-and-nurseries>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/closure-of-educational-settings-information-for-parents-and-carers/reopening-schools-and-other-educational-settings-from-1-june>

In this advice, it talks about the possibility of a phased return to school for all primary year groups before the summer holidays. The rationale the guidance provides is that younger children are being prioritised in the first phases of wider opening, because:

- There is moderately high scientific confidence in evidence suggesting younger children are less likely to become unwell if infected with coronavirus (COVID-19);
- Evidence shows the particularly detrimental impact which time spent out of education can have upon them; and
- Older children are more likely to have higher numbers of contacts outside of school so pose a greater transmission risk, and they are typically better able to learn at home.

I would like to reassure you that if we do begin a phased re-opening from 1st June (or 8th June in some cases) all our Focus-Trust academies will be working to a set of common principles:

1. The obligation to ensure the safety of pupils, staff and parents
2. A commitment to the welfare and wellbeing of pupils and staff
3. Approaching the planning task in a measured and considered way; and
4. Making the best possible decisions on the basis of the evidence we have and with the individual challenges we face in our different schools

We recognise that school is going to be a very different place for some time as children will be in on a rota basis because of the need to ensure social distancing. We understand many of you will be worried about your child's health and emotional wellbeing and also, the health and safety of your own family members. We are in regular discussions with our school leaders, the DfE, Local Authorities and unions on how we can open schools safely and with minimal risk to our children, staff and our families.

During lockdown, you will hopefully have seen our Family Newsletters on a variety of topics. If you haven't seen them, you can find them all on our website. I hope you find them supportive <https://www.focus-trust.co.uk/caring-for-our-communities-during-the-coronavirus-pandemic/>

Over the next few weeks, as we work out how we are going to operate on a day-to-day basis and ensure our schools are the safe place they always have been, our Head Teachers/Principals will be in contact with you. Until then our advice is to Stay Home, Save Lives and Protect the NHS and look after your family. This is a very difficult time for everyone but, hopefully, we will all get through this.

Your sincerely

HRowland

Helen Rowland
Chief Executive

