

12<sup>th</sup> March 2020

To: All employees of Reach South Academy Trust  
Subject: COVID-19 2019-nCoV, Coronavirus

Dear Colleagues,

Over the past few weeks, the Trust has been making arrangements to prepare and cope with the infection spread of Coronavirus. As part of those preparations, **Ian Carnwell** (Director of the Learning Environment) [ian.carnwell@reachsouth.org](mailto:ian.carnwell@reachsouth.org) has been appointed by myself to take the lead on the co-ordination of our preparations.

The Trust receives daily up-dates from the Department for Education (DfE) on the situation as well as guidance being provided by Public Health England and local public health officials. We strongly believe that the Government and the public health authorities are best placed to advise how we should prepare and respond to the situation. The Executive and the Trustees are reviewing that advice on a daily basis. Ian Carnwell is in turn in daily contact with academy Headteachers to update the advice and support on individual issues as they arise. It is the Trust's policy to follow this expert advice.

So far, we have had a number of concerns that have led to both staff and pupils self-isolating and in some cases being tested for the virus. I am pleased to say that so far no member of staff or pupils has tested positive for the virus. We have as a precaution cancelled or postponed school trips abroad or to different parts of the UK. We have also cancelled or postponed a number of meetings that would involve significant numbers of people travelling and coming together. For example, we have postponed our Governors' Conference.

It is important that we find the right balance over the coming weeks to take the precautions to keep our pupils and staff safe while not over-reacting or panicking. Many of us will pick up cold and flu viruses at this time of year and display similar symptoms to Coronavirus. In most cases we will just have the usual seasonal bugs. However, over the coming weeks and months some of us may pick up an infection of Covid-19. It is possible that some of us will catch the virus and not know, we will have no symptoms, but we will be contagious. Of those of us that do have symptoms, it is currently thought that 80% of us will have a very mild set of symptoms for a few weeks. The remaining 20% of us may have more severe symptoms. Children appear, so far, to only get mild symptoms. The elderly and those with underlying health issues are more vulnerable.

At this point in time, the Government is clear that there is no reason to close a school. Where a case is confirmed, then the Trust and the school will receive significant support from local public health professionals. A school will only close where Public Health England, advise that it is appropriate, in accordance with DfE policy guidance. The school will receive targeted and deep cleaning as appropriate in these circumstances to protect all of us and our pupils. If the Government's approach changes over the coming weeks, and the decision is taken to close schools, then we are preparing for that scenario as well. We will be providing more information

on our expectations on staff and how we will support our pupils where children are required to self-isolate or where schools are closed.

I know that many people around the country are very worried about the impact of this on wider community life. One worry for many people is whether their income will be affected if they have to self-isolate or their place of work is closed. Specific advice has been provided from our Director of HR to school leaders and Executive Directors who in turn can advise you as your line managers. Can I reassure all employees of Reach South, should you be required to self-isolate or we have to close your normal place of work, you will not suffer any loss of income. If you are concerned that your specific contractual arrangements might put you at risk of a loss or reduction of income, please contact our HR team who will provide individual advice. However, I would like to reiterate that no employee will suffer a loss or reduction of income where they are asked to self-isolate by a recognised health care professional or the school has to close.

We are all employees of Reach South and we are all public servants. Our country is facing an extraordinary period, possibly of some months, where we will all need to be flexible in our working practices to support not only our pupils but also the wider country. Political leaders have talked about up to 20% of the workforce being ill at any one time. That will require the rest of us to pull together and work differently. It will not be business as usual and we all may have to be flexible to support each other's work for the Trust in the tasks we may be asked to do. Having said that, normality will return, hopefully quickly.

Please look out for the updates that we will publish on the Reach South website.

Please follow the advice to protect yourselves as well as our pupils and their families.



Dean Ashton

CEO Reach South Academy Trust