



Sunday 3rd January 2021

Dear Parents and Carers,

You may have seen through the media that there are concerns being expressed across the country about the reopening of schools following the Christmas Closure period.

### **Harmony Trust position**

The government position is that the majority of primary schools will remain open. As a Trust we will do our utmost to ensure that we can continue to provide education on site to all our pupils where we can do so safely and in line with our risk assessments. The education of our pupils is of the highest priority. The health, safety and wellbeing of our staff, our pupils and our families is also of the highest importance to us and we continue to apply all possible risk controls in our Academies.

### **Trade Union position and its impact on staffing**

You may have also seen that teaching and support staff unions are advising their members to not return to work because they have deemed the workplace unsafe. Their concerns are the rising infection rates and increased transmission rate of the new strain of Coronavirus.

**Consequently, we have started to receive a number of letters from our staff members saying that they will not be able to attend work to facilitate whole class teaching.** They are willing to be in school to provide education for vulnerable pupils and the children of key workers and to carry out tasks from home, including providing remote education for our pupils. We respect the concerns of our employees who have sent these letters following such advice from their trade unions.

The fact that the Government and the Trade Unions have taken very different stances has put the Trust and our Principals in a difficult position in respect of opening academies. We hope there will be greater national agreement shortly over the best way of ensuring children are educated and everyone is kept safe during this latest phase of the pandemic.

We are facing a dynamic and ever-changing situation. So far, we have had to take the decision to open two of our academies to vulnerable pupils and the children of key workers only these being Westwood Academy in Oldham and Ashcroft Primary Academy in Derby. This is due to significant staffing shortages and as a result not being able to open the academy to all pupils safely. This position will be kept under daily review. **At this point all our other academies remain open to all pupils, but we will need to continue to monitor the situation carefully and make decisions based on our risk assessments.**

We know that this may cause difficulties to some of our families. We will endeavour to keep our academies open as long as it is safe to do so and to communicate in a timely and open way if we are unable to staff them fully.

Thank you again for your continued support in what remains a challenging time for all.

Antony Hughes, CEO