



## Eastbury Community School

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### Primary School

**Head of Primary:** Ms Aisha Raymond  
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### Secondary School

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May 22, 2020

Dear Parents/Carers,

I hope that this finds you and all your family safe and well.

### Reopening of Secondary Schools

Thank you for the messages of support we have received during this difficult time. There continues to be a lot of debate about the reopening of schools. At the moment, much of this centres around primary schools as, subject to a final decision on 28 May, the government is expecting primaries to open to whole year groups (years R, 1 and 6) from 1 June. The situation for secondary schools is more nuanced, in that the government's ambition is for 'some face-to-face contact' for Y10 and Y12 before the summer rather than full opening. Whatever happens, we will not see education as normal in secondary schools before September. The thinking goes that unlike primary-age children, older teenagers are more likely to meet in groups on their way to and from school, travel longer distances by public transport and also study a range of subjects so it is impossible to keep them in one classroom for the whole day (as is the primary school requirement) and still deliver a meaningful experience.

Even if the government announces on 28 May that we can begin opening from 1 June, our position is we will not be opening from 1 June beyond our provision for the children of key workers and vulnerable students.

We will continue to keep the situation under review over the coming weeks. At the point when we have sufficient guidance and reassurance from government and the local authority, and when we think we can safely deliver something meaningful in school for Y10 and Y12 that is supportive and meaningful, then we will move to some level of reopening and let you know the details of this. In the meantime, we will continue to set distance learning work for all year groups. Our Governing Body has been kept regularly informed and is in support of the position we are taking as a school.

As part of the national debate, some sections of the media have chosen this as a time to vilify school leaders, teachers and school staff for 'blocking' the reopening of schools. This is regrettable. We are acutely aware of the impact of our closure on our most disadvantaged students, and do not need to be told this by the newspapers. The terrible impact of this situation on the most vulnerable in our community certainly keeps me awake, and much of the time of the senior team and year co-ordinators is being spent trying to mitigate it. The government's scheme to provide laptops, for example, has been slow to materialise, however when we have been asked for support with iPads and laptops we have done everything we can to accommodate requests. Our Wellbeing and Child Protection Teams are working all day every day contacting students and families who need our support.

In order that we can fully understand any concerns you have as parents/carers about the re-opening of schools, we will be sending out a survey. I urge you to complete this survey, as your views and comments are a crucial element of our future planning in these difficult times.

Teachers at Eastbury Community School know how important face-to-face contact will be for our vulnerable students, and of course all the others, especially those studying for GCSE or A Level exams next year. Some



people say that the risks of reopening are low, and perhaps they are if the rules are followed. But if we were to open and follow social distancing guidance and requirements for students to stay in the same room all day, we would not be able to deliver anything like the normal school experience. Please rest assured that when we think the quality of what we are able to deliver in school outbalances the risks and inevitable compromises it will entail, we will open and we will welcome back our students. The teachers want to see them so much, and I know they want to see their teachers. The time will come.

### **Distance Learning**

Thank you for working with your children at home as best you can. I know it is not easy, and there are ups and downs every day. Most of the feedback we have had has been positive and helped us to continue to improve. If something is not clear or a student does not know what to do, the best first port of call is the teacher concerned. We continue to refine the systems we are using to engage our students. From 1 June, we will continue trialling live lessons and feedback sessions for year 12 and year 10 using TEAMS, as well as other interactive activities. Not all teachers will be doing this, but it will become part of the range of tools that we use. Please note that we will not be setting distance learning work over half term.

### **Stationery and Exercise Books**

Some parents tell us that they have run out of basic items to help students learn at home. We have supplies of these available in school should students need them. This includes pens, pencils, paper and exercise books. These will be on desks at the main reception, please come in a take a pack if needed, ensuring you maintain social distancing, between 10am and 2.00pm.

### **Childcare Provision**

This provision will continue to operate from 1-5 June for the children of critical workers, children with Education, Health and Care Plans and vulnerable children (those with social workers). When students are in school, they will undertake the distance learning work set by their usual teachers. Please only use this provision if it is necessary for you to do so. If possible, and it is safe to do so, you should keep your children at home and they should complete the distance learning work they have been set there. All arrangements are in place for hygiene and physical distancing when students are in school

### **And Finally**

Friday is the last day of this half term. It is so strange that we have not seen our amazing students for nine weeks now; the corridors and canteens, classrooms and science labs, courts and playgrounds of Eastbury Community School have been empty for longer than ever before. The site echoes with the footsteps of the small number of children we're looking after, and a few members of staff each day. We genuinely miss our students, they are the heart and soul of our school and whilst we cannot be with them physically, they are at the heart of everything that we do. It is my aim that all our students continue to feel that love and care from us, and so feel the connection that gives them the strength they need to keep working hard in return. I send my best wishes to you and your families for a restful and safe half term.

Kind Regards



Sharon Collins

Head of Secondary

