9 July 2020

Dear Parent/Carer

It’s odd to be writing this end of term/school year letter when the school year – let alone all our lives – has been so totally disrupted by Covid 19 and the need to keep us all safe. Throughout this time, however, I am happy to say that Horizons Specialist Academy Trust (HSAT) has managed to keep its schools open for our most vulnerable students and for the children of keyworkers – although of course with numbers far below those normally attending.

I want to take this opportunity to thank all parents and carers for your support and understanding over what has been a most difficult time for you and your families. In circumstances which seemed almost to change daily, our overarching aim throughout has been to ensure that our children and young people, as well as our staff, were as safe as possible when with us. With that in mind, I also want to offer my sincere thanks to all our staff who, through attendance and involvement in school and the preparation of Home Learning Packs, worked hard to provide continuing education for our students. I am particularly indebted to Principals and those senior leaders who have been an active and visible presence in our schools over this challenging period.

Our aim now is to ensure that the vast majority of our students can safely resume their education in September when the new school year begins. For the very small number of students who are clinically extremely vulnerable, we will look at their situations and their needs on an individual basis and will be guided by advice from the Department for Education and Public Health England. In addition, parents and carers will be required to seek advice from their own medical professionals.

I have noted, for your information, some of the main points from the very latest government guidance to schools “Guidance for full opening: special schools and other specialist settings” -

[www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-for-full-opening-special-schools-and-other-specialist-settings/guidance-for-full-opening-special-schools-and-other-specialist-settings](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-for-full-opening-special-schools-and-other-specialist-settings/guidance-for-full-opening-special-schools-and-other-specialist-settings)

* The government plan is based on a**twin strategy of limiting contact between pupils and implementing hygiene measures** (these are described in more detail within ‘system of controls’ in the published guidance in section one).
* Thorough and regular handwashing and the promotion of good respiratory hygiene (the 'catch it, bin it, kill it' approach) are seen as essential elements.
* Enhanced cleaning to maintain cleanliness standards within schools.
* A requirement that people who are ill should stay at home.
* Active engagement with NHS Test and Trace
* Contact between individuals is to be limited in two main ways:
1. By ensuring pupils remain in consistent groups ('bubbles') wherever possible, thereby minimising the number of contacts between different people across the school, and
2. By maintaining distance between individuals wherever possible ('social distancing').

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Because our schools have been open throughout the lockdown period, HSAT has implemented a rigorous programme of regular handwashing, social distancing, provision of relevant Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) where appropriate, and regular and intensive cleaning of communal areas and classrooms. This places us in a strong position to confidently implement government requirements and manage the situation as safely as we possibly can. Easy and routine access to hand washing facilities and to hand gel in every classroom and public areas, and the comprehensive provision of tissues and safe disposal of these, will all contribute to making the school environment as safe as possible for staff and students alike.

Students will also be organised and taught in “bubbles”, i.e. distinct groups which as far as is possible remain constant throughout the school day and across the range of school activities – thereby minimising the risk of cross-infection from the wider student and staff community.

Principals and senior staff will be in touch with you soon both to detail the Covid-Secure arrangements within their academy and update you on the specific arrangements for your child/young person. For those who are entitled to free school meals, free school meal vouchers will also be provided over the summer holiday period.

All of us in Horizons Specialist Academy Trust are very much looking forward to a new school year which will see us reunited with our students and continuing our journey of learning together.

Lastly, I wish you all a happy - and safe - summer period. I do hope that you will have the opportunity to experience and enjoy some of those social and leisure opportunities which provide you, your children and families with both pleasure and relaxation.

I look forward to welcoming our pupils and students back for the new academic session on Wednesday 2nd September.

Yours sincerely



Elizabeth Horne CBE

Chief Executive

Horizons Specialist Academy Trust