



July 2020

Dear Parents and Carers

**Re: JTMAT schools ready for the new term**

On behalf of John Taylor Multi-Academy Trust, we want to take this opportunity to thank you for your continued and enthusiastic support throughout 2019/20. When we embarked upon the school year, no one could have envisaged the challenges that we have encountered - personally, as families, and as communities. We have responded with resilience and positivity. Our staff and our children have been working so hard to keep learning going, and our partnership with you has grown stronger through your active engagement with home learning and your support as we have brought more children back into our schools as restrictions ease.

You will be aware that the government has confirmed its ambition that school will resume for “all children, every day” from the start of the new term in September:

“Given the improved position, the balance of risk is now overwhelmingly in favour of children returning to school. For the vast majority of children, the benefits of being back in school far outweigh the very low risk of coronavirus (COVID-19).”

Our schools, supported by the Trust, have been working incredibly hard to ensure that this ambition is realised as effectively as we can – with your child’s safety at the heart of our work. Each of our schools is different, and so whilst there are common measures that will be taken by us all (hand sanitisation, grouping children into ‘bubbles’ to reduce interactions, heightened cleaning routines), some aspects of our planning will be distinct for your child’s school. It is therefore vitally important that you read forthcoming letters from your child’s school and ensure that you are fully aware of what the school is doing to reduce risk of contagion, and what measures are expected from you in support.

Some of our schools will have transport – both school and public – to consider in their guidance, whereas others will be keen to ensure that parents are dropping off and collecting children in a way that works best to preserve our ‘bubbles’. All of our schools will be wanting to impress upon your children the need for high standards of behaviour, personal responsibility, working to the best of their ability, and meeting our expectations in school and the wider community. Your support in this area is crucial, and very much appreciated as always.

Your support is also crucial in ensuring your child’s attendance at school. We are all aware that during this term there has been a relaxation of statutory requirements for parents and carers to send their children to school and a consequent relaxation of sanctions such as penalty notices for those who do not. The Department for Education is clear that from September we will return to the obligations upon parents that were in place before ‘lockdown’. Their guidance states:

“Missing out on more time in the classroom risks pupils falling further behind. Those with the higher overall absence tend to achieve less well in both primary and secondary school. School attendance will therefore be mandatory again from the beginning of the autumn term. This means from that point, the usual rules on school attendance will apply, including:



- Parents' duty to secure that their child attends regularly at school where the child is a registered pupil at the school and they are of compulsory school age;
- Schools' responsibilities to record attendance and follow up absence;
- The availability to issue sanctions, including fixed penalty notices in line with local authorities' "codes of conduct"

Please be assured that where children are not able to attend school as parents are following clinical and/or public health advice, they will not be penalised.

Whilst we acknowledge that the disruption to our lives and our schools over the last few months has been considerable, we are looking forward with a huge amount of optimism and enthusiasm to the new term. For some of our children, it marks new beginnings in new schools, and for others it is an opportunity for further successes and experiences in their current school – one year older. The children who have been working in school throughout this period, joined more recently by others in identified year groups, have all shown how much they value their school experience. We look forward to all being able to return to that experience. 'Normal' times at school may seem a distant memory for some of our children, and for you as parents. Yet, it is worth reflecting that in a child's educational journey from Reception to Post-16, our time of disruption is only a very small part of their learning and development. Our schools are working hard to ensure children can get back into the routines and habits that make their learning and progress most effective, and that any gaps in their knowledge and skills are addressed as promptly yet supportively as we can. Once again, your support in this is hugely appreciated.

We will close this letter by once again thanking you for your continued support for us. We look forward to the new term as one where our partnerships, strengthened through this time, can take your child's learning, development, and enjoyment of school to new heights.

With every best wish for a safe and happy summer, and the promise of a great year to come.

Handwritten signature of Mike Donoghue in black ink.

Mike Donoghue  
CEO, JTMAT

Handwritten signature of Gareth Moss in black ink.

Gareth Moss  
Chair, JTMAT