



'Engaging learners to enhance their life opportunities and outcomes'

BEST
BELIEVE ENGAGE SUCCEED TRUST

7 January 2021

Dear Parents and Carers,

Pandemic Lockdown - Education provision in Trust Schools

All staff in the Trust's schools have been working hard to respond very quickly to the constantly changing government requirements placed on schools to ensure the safe education of your child during the ongoing pandemic. We have been very impressed with their commitment to children's education, professionalism and agility to re-design how your child's education is delivered so rapidly.

From the Prime Minister's announcement of a new National Lockdown with all of England moving to Tier 5 and further government guidance; mainstream schools had clarity on their closure to all but the most vulnerable children and the children of key workers. However, such clarity does not apply to Alternative and Specialist schools. We, along with others, have been seeking further information concerning the education of your children during lockdown. This clarity is needed so that we can balance the requirement to meet the educational needs of vulnerable children plus key workers' children with our statutory role in keeping everyone safe.

Some clarity has been provided recently, which we would like to share with you.

The Local Authority yesterday, after much discussion with schools, the Regional Schools' Commissioner and the DfE issued the following statement to schools and parents of children in the specialist sector:

"While the law has not changed regarding the provision within EHCPs at this time, however circumstances are far from normal, with the pandemic far worse than at any previous point, and while providers will do all that they can to make provision, there will be challenges due to staff absences and illness and safety considerations. This means that education, health and care providers will need to prioritise their services. Providers are being asked to work closely with parents and carers to agree reasonable solutions that will provide the best possible support for children and young people given service constraints at this difficult time."

The Alternative Provision/SEND professional network has also released the following statement:

"AP and SEND Leaders remain committed to delivering the following two key aims during this lockdown:

- 1. strive to keep children and staff safe, and*
- 2. keeping children effectively engaged in education.*

A blended offer will be contextualised to meet the needs of pupils and families with the staff and resources that are available to deliver the provision. This Network trusts its CEOs and will continue to support all Leaders of AP and SEND."

We would like to reassure you that the Believe Engage Succeed Trust remains committed to the principles of providing a high quality learning offer for all of its pupils, whilst keeping staff and pupils safe, even in these extremely challenging times. We are already working with parents and carers to identify how each child can engage effectively in their education during this lockdown. For some pupils, this is likely to be some form of blended learning offer.

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We know that some families feel that their child is safest at home because of their own or their child's clinical vulnerability, or for other reasons of safety. We will work these parents and carers to provide a virtual offer to support their child learn at home. For some pupils, their virtual offer includes a member of staff coming to the house to provide work-packs and socially distanced engagement.

Where your child has an EHCP, we are committed to ensuring we are meeting their EHCP requirements within our specific service constraints and know that the Health Teams are working virtually but with urgent face to face support available too.

All of the Trust's schools are open and working with every parent to create a provision that is safe and meets your child's learning and developmental needs. Through these discussions, we have gained confidence that children who need to be learning at home will not be disadvantaged.

As a Trust, we are confident that our school's risk assessments for the children, staff and the school, as a whole, will create as safe an environment as possible. Also, following government guidance, all our schools are putting in place regular Covid-19 testing of staff. At The Albany, we are testing of all secondary age pupils for Covid-19 twice at the start of term. Implementing the testing procedures has required considerable investment of time and staff which has affected the level of face-to-face learning that will be possible within the schools over the first two weeks of term, particularly where testing also involves pupils.

Each school's risk assessment is on their website, highlighting the ways in which they are addressing the risks within their school and to your child's ongoing education. If you have any questions about this or any aspect of your child's education during this lock down, please do contact your child's school in the first instance. The Trust leadership will also be happy to engage with you should this be helpful.

Yours sincerely,

Jan Hatchell
CEO

Viv Hughes
Chair of Trustees