



The Consortium Trust

Where together excellence and pupils thrive

Covid-19 Parental Briefing

4th January 2021

Dear Parents and carers,

First of all HAPPY NEW YEAR, I hope that you have managed to get some well-deserved family time over the holiday period. Many of you will have already been in touch with your school, as we all know both Norfolk and Suffolk have moved into Tier 4 and the new variant c-19 virus is more prevalent in our communities. Over the past few days I have held meetings with Academy Heads, Executive Leaders and the Trust Board and just wanted to offer you some reassurance and advise you of the Trust's position.

I will try not to be political here, but, I am finding the position of government increasingly difficult to understand. Schools are of course educators, our job is to care for and educate your children. I remain as committed to that as ever and I will do everything possible to keep our settings open where it is safe to do so. The overwhelming public opinion and the evidence indicates that children are best supported when at school. Therefore I find it hard to comprehend why the government continues to try to 'do education' on the cheap. We have not received the additional support and funding necessary and even worse, the failure to prioritise school staff for testing and vaccination is in my view unacceptable.

Notwithstanding this, it is currently the Trust's position that all schools and settings will open as close to normal as possible tomorrow to all children. Our staff have genuine worries about what the next few weeks and months will bring and for some it is not possible to return to a physical work environment in the current circumstances. There will be unfortunately some disruption to teaching and learning at some schools with restricted access for some families. Individual schools will be advising you of the local arrangements.

I appreciate that parents will have concerns around returning their children to school, while we are in Tier 4, Nigel Shaddick, Head of Service WISA and the inclusion team will be offering support to families and children that are not able or willing to attend school in person. While we are all working hard to keeping as much provision open as possible, I also respect the right of parents to make a decision that is appropriate for their family. The Trust will work with you to ensure that the child is placed at the centre of any decision making and we will not look to punitive measures while we have an active dialogue with families.

As you would expect I am liaising closely with all staff and unions to ensure that we do everything possible to support the health and well-being of all colleagues, school risk assessments have been reviewed, some new actions are in place and I am of course monitoring closely guidance from the government and the Department for Education. As soon as we get updated instructions these will be shared with you. We obviously can't rule out extra restrictions and the Trust have put robust additional measures including improved digital learning should we need to use it.

I would like to conclude by stating that I am so very grateful to all our staff that have been forced to make some difficult decisions, they have and I am certain continue to work tirelessly to ensure that your child receives the very best education possible in extremely difficult circumstances. I am also grateful for the number of supportive emails and responses to our social media feeds from parents, your support is very much appreciated.

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Registered office address: 27 Norwich Road, Halesworth, Suffolk, IP19 8BX.

www.consortiumacademy.org. Tel.No: 01986 835670. Email: businesssupport@consortiumacademy.org

Principal & CEO: Andrew Aalders-Dunthorne. Email: principal@consortiumacademy.org



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Let's all hope that the national situation improves quickly and that we can all truly experience a Happy New Year.

Yours faithfully

Andrew Aalders-Dunthorne
CEO & Principal