



# HIGHFIELD LITTLEPORT ACADEMY

*An Active Learning Trust School*

Executive Headteacher: Simon Bainbridge  
Head of School: Yvonne Skillern

Friday 17<sup>th</sup> July 2020

Dear Parents & Carers,

I am writing to update you about some of the recent COVID-19 developments for special schools like ours.

Firstly, may I take this opportunity to thank you for all of your support during the COVID-19 period. I do not underestimate the challenges that all parents and carers have faced during these last few months, especially for families with a child or young person with special educational needs. We recognise the difference that your help with home learning has made to each individual and want to thank you for this. This work will make it easier for teachers and supporting staff to help pupils to catch up, or keep up, with their learning when school starts again, for all, in September.

## Opening over the summer holidays

The government is not asking schools and settings to remain open over the summer holidays. Schools and settings therefore will not be expected to open for vulnerable pupils and the children of critical workers over this period. Some providers are offering paid childcare or holiday activities and will be able to operate over the summer holiday period. Parents should make arrangements with such providers directly.

## Recent announcements: special schools and the Autumn term

The government has issued schools and settings with advice about how they can open in September at minimal risk to pupils and to staff, now that the prevalence of COVID has decreased. Current restrictions on class sizes will be lifted, but we will keep children in 'bubbles' to minimise the number of daily contacts with others that each pupil has. At Highfield Littleport we will have two bubbles (Upstairs and Downstairs floors) which will not mix within the school day. Students will work within their classes but still be within this larger protective 'bubble'. Measures, such as regular cleaning and handwashing, will, of course, continue. In order to minimise transmission we will also be restricting visitors to school. Our school, supported by the Trust and Local Authority, is putting rigorous procedures in place to minimise the likelihood of viral transmission, and respond to any positive COVID cases. Testing is widely available and we will alert parents should any suspected or confirmed cases arise, in line with the agreed Public Health England (PHE) actions and the NHS Test and Trace process. Appropriate actions will be taken in the case of any outbreak, and remote education will be made available to any pupils who might have to self-isolate.

Our schools approach will reflect local context and circumstances. Our school has worked closely with the Trust to update their risk assessments and consider carefully the arrangements. School opening will be subject to the Trust Board approving these plans. This will reduce risk to the lowest reasonably practicable level. Once approved our risk assessment will be posted on our school website.

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For some students we may need to operate phased returns but Department Leaders will have already been in touch to discuss this. Normal school times for the day will resume with no closure on a Wednesday afternoon as from September. We are looking forward to welcoming all students back to school on Monday 7<sup>th</sup> September 2020.

## Education, Health and Care Plans

The government has put in place interim arrangements to the legislation that has allowed the local authority to implement easements on the duty to provide aspects of an EHCP and make reasonable endeavours to provide as much support as possible. This was put in place to support schools, social care and health services focus on addressing the COVID pandemic. It is expected that this legislation will return to usual expectations and the provision outlined in EHCP's will be resumed as quickly as possible. However, some services will still need to be retained to support the pandemic, so there may still be a restriction on face to face support provided by health, therapy and other services. All services are working hard to continue to offer as much support as possible and, where appropriate, will offer remote support and interventions. I would like to thank you for your resilience and support and we will be actively supporting parents/ carers and pupils to return to school and understand that individual circumstances may require a longer period of phased return to ensure the safety of pupils. Please find an attached letter from the Service Director for Cambridgeshire & Norfolk, Children and Young People's Services giving more information on health provision.

## Attendance from September

The risk to children of becoming severely ill from COVID-19 is very low and we know there are negative, and sometimes lasting, health and educational impacts for pupils who are out of school and settings for long periods. It is with this in mind that the government's guidance states that pupils will be expected to attend their school / setting, as normal, come September. A small number of pupils will still be unable to attend because they are self-isolating and have had symptoms or a positive test result themselves, or because they are a close contact of someone who has COVID-19.

Shielding advice will pause on 1 August, subject to a continued decline in the rates of COVID transmission. This means that those pupils who remain on the shielded patient list can also return to their school or setting, as can those who have family members who are shielding. Some pupils who are not required to shield but who remain under the care of a specialist medical professional may need to discuss their care with that professional before returning to their school or setting. I would recommend that all parent carers have a discussion with their doctor / paediatrician to discuss the any specific risks and ask for advice about whether it is safe for your child to return to school. Please advise the school or setting if the guidance you receive is that your child should remain at home. Other than in these exceptional cases, or where a pupil's absence is otherwise authorised, it will be the school or settings' expectation that pupils attend as normal.

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## Transport

Officers at the Council are working hard on transport planning for September 2020 and this will continue well into the summer holiday period as we await further government guidance. This is a complex process involving re-visiting all of the school routes taking into account the teaching bubbles we plan to operate, the availability of vehicles, drivers and Passenger Assistants and, when we receive it, updated government guidance. It may, therefore, be sometime before you are contacted by the transport team about arrangements for your child(ren). Please be assured that the safety and well-being of pupils on their journeys to and from school continues to be the Local Authorities priority and bear with them as they work through the arrangements with us as a school. The Local Authority will provide updates when we can via the Local Offer website -

Cambridgeshire Local Offer - <https://tinyurl.com/CambsLocalOffer>

## Catch-Up Funding

You may have heard that the government will be providing funding so that schools and settings can provide additional tuition and other support to pupils. At the time of writing, detailed guidance has not been released about this. As soon as it has, we will work together to consider the best ways forward to support your child's individual needs.

Thank you, again, for everything you are doing to help prepare your child to make a strong and safe start to the new school year.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Yvonne Skillern', with a horizontal line extending to the right.

Yvonne Skillern  
Head of School, Highfield Littleport Academy