



**Wednesday 3<sup>rd</sup> June 2020**

### **GST Statement to Parents and Carers on Phased Reopening of Schools**

Following our communication on 13th May, we are contacting you to inform you of the GST's position regarding the phased reopening of our schools.

All eleven schools have worked very closely together to devise risk assessments and to share solutions to some of the common issues which have been encountered. However, as a result of the unique context of all of our schools, plans to increase capacity are different for each school in terms of how many children can be accommodated, which year groups can be accommodated and when children will be admitted. There are significant variations in each school's assessment of feasibility and risk which are mostly due to:

- **Variation in the number of children who are currently in school**

Some children of key workers and those children who the DfE or school deem to be vulnerable are currently in school and being taught or supervised in 'bubbles'. These numbers vary widely across schools but have increased for all schools and could continue to do so. In some schools, there is now very limited, if any, capacity for additional children from any of the priority year groups.

- **The number of staff available to supervise and teach the children in the 'bubbles'**

All schools have a different number of staff employed and there are also differences in the number of staff available to work. Some staff are absent due to illness or are 'shielding' because of their own medical vulnerability or that of family members. All schools currently need a higher ratio of staff to safely supervise and teach the children in small 'bubbles'.

- **The physical space available and the layout of different buildings**

The size and number of classrooms varies from school to school. Some classrooms can accommodate fewer than 10 children once the safety guidance has been applied. Some schools have more space than others and some have additional rooms such as libraries, nurseries, intervention rooms or computing rooms to accommodate more groups if there are sufficient staff available. However, in some schools, additional spaces are being used to store furniture and resources which have been moved from classrooms.

- **Resourcing and applying the guidance**

Some schools are still waiting for deliveries of resources (eg PPE, furniture and cleaning equipment) which need to be in place in order to comply with the guidance.

It is important for schools to plan all stages of the reopening process with care, caution and with the knowledge of each school's unique context and capacity. Each school has a clear rationale for its decisions and actions and these are all fully supported by the City Council, Newcastle's Promise Board and the Gosforth Schools' Trust. All arrangements which schools put in place will be subject to change as a result of changes to local and national data, each school's staffing capacity or if current advice and guidance changes.

All schools will make it clear to parents and carers that the take up of an offered place is optional. Schools will fully support your decision. It is up to individual families to consider their own risk factors such as medical conditions, individual needs, your journey to and from school or belonging to a vulnerable group. Your child's school will be happy to talk to you about this if you have any concerns.

Your own child's school will keep you up to date with their decision making and any changes which apply to you.

Thank you to all of our families across Gosforth for your ongoing support and patience.

GST