



CEO COVID19 BRIEFING

Spring Term and Summer Term 2020

Update; September 2020

Opening statement

During this time, we have thought long and hard about the prospects for our children in the Trust. It is easy to become increasingly indignant about the extent to which the current situation will favour the advantaged and even more disadvantage those not so lucky. Some may feel we will be unable to right the impact in exacerbating inequalities that will arise from this pandemic; we have been alarmed to hear that domestic violence has increased at least two-fold; food poverty is on the rise; social care is under significant pressure and people are neglecting addressing their own health and wellbeing out of fear. However, despite the many challenges brought about by the virus, our spirits have done anything but dampen. It is the collective expertise of our member schools committed to the work of the Trust that has helped us to establish and continue to develop a clear and exacting response to the crisis. One that is focused on meeting the needs of children and staff. Consequently, we are convinced the children and staff in city schools will emerge even stronger and more resilient in the capable, professional and compassionate hands of our senior school leaders and LA Officers.

It is worth noting that some of our Board members have written in to say:

'I am so proud to be involved in the NST and hearing about your hard work and that of all the head teachers and staff make that ever stronger. The work that you all do is humbling and I know that you all will do you very best in impossible circumstances to care for and teach all the children across the city.'.....'You and the school leaders are clearly doing a fantastic job in such uncertain times.....it is extremely heartening to know that we are working with such experienced educators in such unusual times...it is also great to witness the inter-agency working, which we know has such impact on vulnerable groups long may it continue... I have certainly seen barriers between traditional sectors come down as never before. We can only hope that this continues...thank you for taking the time to give your detailed update and please share our best wishes with teachers who have continued to work in the classroom with children, and those planning the next stages.'

Connectivity

In light of the pandemic we have redefined our lines of communication to include regular online briefings with;

1. The Local Authority core team-Nick Lee (Director of Services) / John Dexter (Director of Education) / Janine Walker (Head of SEND) / David Thompson (Health and Safety Officer) / Pete McChonnie (Head of Inclusion and Access) / Cllr David Mellen (Executive Lead for the council) / Cllr Neghat Khan (Portfolio holder for education)
2. Trade Union representatives
3. NST head Teacher cluster groups
4. NST system leaders

The Local Authority education department has provided NST with significant advice, guidance, support and expertise whilst continuing to track progress against the NST Work Programme and Key Performance Indicators.

COVID19

Since March 2020 we have created a strategic response to the circumstances we find ourselves in by;

- constructing the COVID19 response toolkit which can be found at;
<http://www.nottinghamschoolstrust.org.uk/coronavirus-information-and-resources/>

The screenshot below is taken from the contents page of the toolkit;

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The first section deals with the initial emergency response and for all of us this phase is over for now. However- given the scale and nature of the crisis there is nothing to say that this will not reoccur. Therefore, we thought it would be useful to keep guidance and model documentation that we might use again, either for a second peak of Coronavirus, or perhaps some pointers for different types of emergency closures.

The Second section gives guidance about safeguarding arrangements and welfare considerations for pupils who are vulnerable.

Section 3 relates to the different situations' schools may find themselves in, including partial opening guidance and checklists, temporary closures of schools, and the reopening of schools which may be equally complicated. This also includes an indication of possible NST cluster/ hub arrangements which can be implemented if a school is forced to close temporarily- so that pupils who need to access a school

place are able to, either because they are vulnerable or because they are the child of a key worker. It also gives the hub school to which the staff of the closed school should report and support, so that all available staff are able to contribute effectively, as well as ensuring pupils are able to access support from adult as they are familiar with and can safeguard them appropriately.

Section 4 holds the NST risk Register.

Section 5 tries to give guidance about where to access resources to ensure you are able to run effectively both as the school is closed, and when it might reopen.

- developing an online, layered communication network across all school leaders and LA Officers (to include Directors of Education and Services, Safeguarding and SEND)
- establishing a set of principles to underpin the wider opening of our schools
- publishing a library of supporting documents
- developing a Trust wide suite of Risk Assessment templates alongside LA Health and Safety Officers

In terms of safeguarding; each school has a named LA officer to whom school leaders report on a weekly basis. This has significantly connectivity between education settings and social care.

We are terribly proud of our school leaders within NST schools. They have, without exception, risen to the challenge this national crisis has brought with it. All schools have remained open throughout and all Head Teachers have gone over and above to make sure our most vulnerable children are carefully monitored and supported. Schools have also endeavored to do all they can to admit and take care of the most vulnerable children and children of key workers since the start of the lockdown. Food banks and charities have been accessed, meals have been provided from day one of the crisis for all FSM children as well as others we identified as vulnerable. Children that did not meet the threshold for social care involvement were encouraged to take up school places and attend. Respite places were offered for those struggling at home either with child or adult mental health. From week one, all schools insisted on home visits and/or welfare telephone calls to children / students / parents / carers on a weekly/ bi weekly basis.

We geared up for a wider opening of our schools on the 1st June and published our plans in advance. These plans included lengthy consultation with all school leaders in the trust, the LA including Cllr David Mellen and Neghat Khan (portfolio holder for education) and the Trade Unions.

Head Teachers helped us deliver a well-considered plan to enable the gradual and wider reopening of our schools. We took every step to reassure parents/carers about the imminent return to school but had to acknowledge that our plans could only be as safe as we could make them. Whilst some parents chose not to allow their children to return we remained concerned about the escalation in domestic violence, the breakdown in foster care arrangements, increased levels of student anxiety and worse still-the unknown levels of abuse and neglect. Without the watchful eye of the teacher we assumed the gaps were widening and vulnerabilities deepening so felt compelled to meet the DfE instruction to widen the return to school beginning on the 1st June.

Following a series of meetings with the LA/Trade Union reps and the CEOs it was agreed that the wider reopening of schools could commence on the 15th June, starting with our Year 6 children. Further meetings with the LA /Trade Unions secured the 22nd June as the date at which schools could continue the wider opening of their schools to more children.

Subject leader networks

During the summer term, nine of our Subject Leader Network meetings took place online, via MS Teams or the Zoom online platform. Subject Leaders have been keen to try out this new way of delivering CPD during the Covid-19 crisis. Where Subject Leaders have decided not to hold a meeting during the summer term, this was generally been due to circumstances making the planned content undeliverable. For example, the PE Network was postponed as the content planned was the 2020 School Games Mark application process (the School Games Mark was paused prior to the meeting taking place), and outdoor learning (which Martin Smith was unable to deliver online). The meetings that took place were:

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Design & Technology -19th May 2020 • Music – 20th May 2020 • RQT – 22nd May 2020 • PSHE – 10th June 2020 • Art – 23rd June 2020 • Inclusion – 24th June 2020 • Assessment Leads – 25th June 2020 • MFL – 30th June 2020 • NQT – 16th July 2020 <p>186 people attended the spring term series of network meetings; 169 from NST schools, and 17 from other schools.</p> <p>Based on all staff who booked attending, our summer term network meetings resulted in 260 hours of CPD being delivered to NST schools.</p> <p>34 of the 36 NST schools attended at least 1 network. The average number of staff attending Networks from each of the 34 participating schools was 5. Subject Leaders were unable to take registers or gather feedback as they normally would, as online meetings do not lend themselves to the completion of such administrative tasks. We had previously decided against gathering electronic feedback after training events due to the likely low return rates, and we felt that this would particularly be the case at the moment with the ongoing Coronavirus situation. Anecdotal feedback from Subject Leaders is that meetings have been well received, with the following quotes being shared with us:</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>“We had 14 NQTs join us in total and they asked questions and were super engaged so it made for a great session!” ... “One RQT stayed behind at the end and said she has found the training/CPD that NST have provided for her NQT and RQT year the most beneficial and wanted to say thank you!”</i></p>
School to School	<p>In addition to actions outlined in the NST Work Programme and the work of our School Improvement Advisory team we have continued to deploy a range of school-based practitioners including senior leaders, middle leaders and specialist teachers to develop and support;</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. NST Subject networks, 2. those new to Headship, 3. peer challenge / review meetings 4. the Head Teacher appointment process, 5. the school self evaluation process, 6. school improvement planning and 7. the annual performance review and Head Teacher appraisal programme.