



Dear Parents and Carers

### **Update on National Lockdown arrangements for Aspire Academy Trust academies**

A warm welcome back to the new term and a happy new year to you all. It certainly is not the start to the term we had all hoped for, but we will do our very best to make it work for your children and for you.

Firstly, may I thank you all for your patience and support. This is a very difficult situation for the whole community, and we want to provide the support you need and deserve.

We are working incredibly hard behind the scenes to ensure we move quickly to the new arrangements now needed. We want you to feel assured we are taking a systematic and thorough approach to ensure all your children are both safe and learning well at home or at school. No stones will be left unturned whilst we update all risk assessments, increase and improve our home learning offer and ensure our staff can work as safely as possible in our schools. This takes time so we ask you to please bear with us. Leaders are holding a series of meetings to sort any issues arising, including one 8.30pm on the night of the announcement so we could ensure as many schools as possible were able to open by 8am the next morning.

You will be aware that our schools will be open for the time being only to vulnerable learners and children of critical workers. As it stands, this will apply up until February half-term. All other pupils will be provided with home learning tasks.

### **Wellbeing**

We know how tough this new lockdown will be for our children and families. We will do everything we can to ensure we support our children's mental health and wellbeing. If your children or any members of your family need any help or support, please do not hesitate to ask. We want to help and support our communities and families through this next very tough period.

### **Critical Workers**

Attached below is the most recent critical worker eligibility list:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-maintaining-educational-provision/guidance-for-schools-colleges-and-local-authorities-on-maintaining-educational-provision>

We are experiencing an extremely high demand for critical worker places. We ask that parents/carers do not use a critical worker place if there is another adult at home, even if you are entitled to. The national lockdown is intended to minimise community transmission. Rates in Cornwall are rising quickly. Please keep your children home if you can do so.

However, we fully understand that many of you have no choice and would rather keep your children at home but because of your work you are unable to do so. If this is the case, we ask that bookings are made only for days when you are working and not as a block. A booking system will start next week and your school will be sending you details.

Please be assured we will look after your children and care for them as best we possibly can.



### **Teachers and support staff**

Please be aware that the guidance for extremely clinically vulnerable members of staff has changed. We also need to take good care of our pregnant members of staff. We may also have staff members sick or self-isolating at any time. This means your child may not always have access to, or be taught by, their normal teacher or teaching assistant.

### **Home Learning**

Your school will be in touch with you with details of the home learning programme as soon as it is ready.

Please note that home learning is not an option but a requirement. Teachers will be monitoring daily and ensuring children are completing the tasks set and will be able to help when they see that children that are struggling.

Common challenges for home learning include the lack of suitable devices, lack of decent Wi-Fi and the constraints for a family when several children need to access online learning at once. A questionnaire is being sent (you may have already filled it in) to you from your school so we may better understand your access to technology. We can then try and help as many families as possible and ensure we provide alternative methods for learning where it is needed.

Please contact your school if you need some support with this.

### **One size does not fit all**

Each child and family will be experiencing unique and different home circumstances. We wish to support you with the home learning and ask that you let your school know if this might require an adaptation for the needs of your child. Schools experienced mixed concerns during the first lockdown from parents – some saying the learning provided was not enough and an equal number saying it was too much. We have learnt from the first lockdown and we have much more robust and supportive procedures in place. We are content for you to modify our approach, to try and find the right pitch and balance for each child. Please inform your teacher/school to tell us if the balance is not working for your child or family situation.

### **Free School Meals**

The Trust will continue to provide support to those families whose children are entitled to free school meals (not universal KS1) regardless of whether they are in school or at home. For children in school, it will be a hot meal where we can, and for those at home it will be vouchers. We will update you on this as soon as we have received guidance from the government and our caterers.

I look forward to continuing to work with you and your children in 2021 and we will endeavor to keep you updated as frequently as we can. Your own school remains your main source of information so please ensure you check your emails regularly for any Arbor notifications and your school's Facebook and Twitter accounts for updates.

Yours faithfully

**Mrs V Bragg**  
Aspire CEO