

The logo for Exceed Academies Trust features the word "Exceed" in a large, bold, blue sans-serif font, with "Academies Trust" in a smaller, blue sans-serif font below it. The text is set against a background of several overlapping, colorful arrows in shades of blue, yellow, and red, all pointing towards the upper right. The arrows have a textured, dotted appearance.

# Exceed Academies Trust

Letter to Parents – September 2020

*Together we Exceed*

Dear Parents / Carers,

## **Returning to School in September – Keeping our schools as safe as possible.**

I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to you for the tremendous support our schools have received from you over the last few months. It has been an incredibly challenging time for everyone. The kindness and care for our community that has been shown in so many ways has been very inspiring. As a Trust we have really enjoyed hearing about the learning that has taken place at home and receiving photos of the drawings and writing from the children.

Exceed Academies have been open to some groups of students since the Government announced lock down in March. In June we were pleased to be able to welcome further students back to school following Government advice. We approached this with great caution, reviewing all the scientific advice, to ensure that we could be as safe as possible. This has gone extremely well, as our safety measures and risk assessments were excellent and our staff, our parents and our students have worked in partnership to keep school safe. Thank you to all those parents who sent your children back into our schools as requested – it has been lovely to see them.

I would also like to thank you for your patience in waiting for our response to the Department of Education's guidance for schools which was released on 2<sup>nd</sup> July and then updated again on the 21<sup>st</sup> August, for the return to school in September. You can be assured that our school leaders and the Trust have been working very hard to plan for the full opening of the school.

You can read the full Government guidance here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/what-parents-and-carers-need-to-know-about-early-years-providers-schools-and-colleges-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-outbreak/what-parents-and-carers-need-to-know-about-early-years-providers-schools-and-colleges-in-the-autumn-term>

**I want to reiterate that at Exceed Academies Trust Health & Safety will remain our paramount concern – we will not put your child or a member of staff at unnecessary risk.**

All of our schools have updated their Operational Risk Assessments for their own specific sites and these can be viewed on the individual school's website.

Your child's school will send out further details before their school opens, but in the meantime, there are some key points that you need to be aware of when thinking about and talking to your child about their return. **By agreeing common principles and expectations, together we can all help our schools stay as safe as possible as we open our doors to all pupils and students.**



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1. You must ensure that if anyone in your household has COVID-19 symptoms, your child must NOT attend school. Any child or staff member who develops symptoms during the school day will be sent home immediately. You must follow the Government guidance 'stay at home: guidance for households with possible or confirmed coronavirus (COVID-19) infection' If anyone in your household is displaying any symptoms of COVID-19, or has tested positive, you MUST inform your school.
2. Your child will be expected to follow behaviour rules relating to physical contact with other pupils and keeping their hands clean. This is to protect your child, their peers and the staff in the school. Pupils will be expected to wash their hands regularly, and use hand sanitiser. This will be available at all our schools.
3. Staff face coverings - The Government advice is quite clear that this is not necessary, however if a staff member wishes to wear a face covering whilst onsite we will not stop them from doing so.
4. If your child has Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities (SEND) your child's school will have been in touch with you regularly over the last few months, and will contact you to explain what provision will look like from September.
5. The Government has advised walking or cycling to school wherever possible to reduce the use of public transport.
6. Attendance at school. The government relaxed the rules on attendance during lockdown this will change in September and attendance will become mandatory again. The Government guidance says:  
  
'Missing out on more time in the classroom risks pupils falling further behind. Those with higher overall absence tend to achieve less well in both primary and secondary school. School attendance will therefore be mandatory again from the beginning of the autumn term.  
This means from that point, the usual rules on school attendance will apply, including:
  - parents' duty to secure that their child attends regularly at school where the child is a registered pupil at school, and they are of compulsory school age;
  - schools' responsibilities to record attendance and follow up absence;
  - the availability to issue sanctions, including fixed penalty notices in line with local authorities' codes of conduct.'
7. If your child falls into an extremely clinically vulnerable category or remains under the care of a specialist health care professional, you should discuss their care before returning to school in September and talk to your school about the situation. Where children are not able to attend school as parents are following clinical and/or public health advice, they will not be penalised.



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8. School kitchens will re-open in September, and lunches will be available again. Pupils eligible for free school meals will return to having their lunch at school and will no longer receive lunch vouchers. This is in line with the Government scheme and what is being provided nationally for all students.
9. Where the school has a uniform pupil will be expected to wear it as per policy again from September. The guidance states that this does not need washing more frequently or any differently to how you would have done prior to the Covid 19 pandemic.
10. The curriculum that we offer our pupils will remain broad and balanced, and will continue to include music, arts and sport - as usual. We look forward to getting back to near normal in September.

We understand that some of you and your children will be anxious about returning in September, after some months out of school. Please be reassured that we are taking exceptional measures to make our schools as safe as they can be. Your school will be providing additional emotional and wellbeing support for any pupils that need it and will also be providing additional opportunities to support learning where this is required.

We are aware that a number of false claims are currently being made on social media (especially Facebook) about what schools will and won't be doing in September. You should be careful about where these stories come from and the motives behind them. If you have any concerns whatsoever about your child's return please make contact with the school at your earliest convenience. In the mean-time I can assure you we won't be secretly vaccinating your children or placing them into the care of the local authority if they display Covid-19 symptoms.

The current situation has lasted for a long time and the 'new normal' will need to continue for as long as is necessary. Our policy and practice may need to change to reflect the latest guidance, we may need to adapt to meet local circumstances and we may once again see further lock downs and home learning. I can assure you that whatever happens we will take a sensible and considered approach to the situation as we have done previously.

We are all looking forward to welcoming our pupils and students back into school in September and we must continue to move forward together to make sure your child gets the brilliant and safe education they deserve.

With very best wishes,

**Duncan Jacques**  
**Chief Executive Officer**