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Dear Parents and Carers,

Thank you for a successful return to school for all pupils/NHS Test and Trace

The percentage of children attending our academies since the return in September has been phenomenal, somewhere around 97%.

Thank you for the part you have played in this and your trust in our academies to keep children safe.

We are aware of difficulties with the national NHS Test and Trace system which we wanted to discuss with you. We know that on the return to school in September each year there is an increase of illness, mainly coughs and colds, as children return to the classroom.

The obvious difficulty this year is that in some cases these symptoms are also the symptoms of COVID-19. We are asking that if your child is exhibiting COVID-19 symptoms; a high temperature, a new, continuous cough, a loss or change to your sense of smell or taste, you do not send them to school but attempt to get them tested. We are aware of the difficulties in obtaining tests but reiterate that they *should not* come into school.

Reports we are receiving suggest that on the whole this is happening, so thank you again. However, problems with the system are putting additional burdens on staff in our academies, particularly when they are being asked to make medical decisions for families around children returning to school for example or to discuss what is a relevant symptom. This is not something that our staff are able to do on your behalf.

We know that parents are the best people to decide whether their children have COVID-19 symptoms or not and whether therefore to seek a test or not; the school is not able to do this for you. We understand that sometimes the symptoms are borderline, for example, is my child's cough continuous? What is meant by continuous? Again, the academy cannot make this decision for you but we do recommend using the NHS 111 service to seek the appropriate medical advice and to help you make that decision.

Further situations where NHS 111 advice should be sought include where you have been unable to book a test, perhaps for a number of days, and your child's COVID-19 symptoms have stopped. In this situation please seek advice from 111 as to whether your child can come back to school or if you should continue to seek a test.



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We want to reiterate once again our thanks to you as you grapple with these difficult decisions and are perhaps struggling to get a test. We hope that this guidance is helpful in ensuring that the right people support you in making the difficult, but necessary, decisions around testing and school attendance.

Yours sincerely,

Richard Cranmer
Chief Executive Officer