

15<sup>th</sup> May 2020



Dear Parents and Carers,

I do hope that you and your families are staying safe and well.

It has been over seven weeks since we took the difficult decision to close Royal School Manchester and Royal College Manchester. At that time, the scale of the impact of the global pandemic in the UK was unknown and the direction being shared with us by the Government was only beginning to emerge.

Much has happened since then and you will no doubt be feeling anxious and frustrated - your lives and routines have been turned upside down, as you try to do the very best for your families. You will be relying on technology more than ever - keeping in regular contact with your child who has remained on site at Seashell Trust throughout lockdown or engaging with our dedicated staff who are providing ongoing support to you and your child remotely.

Throughout the coronavirus crisis, our primary aim has been to ensure the health, safety and well-being at all times of our students, our Seashell families and our staff. I want to reassure you that Seashell Trust has been doing everything possible to support you and your family as the crisis has unfolded.

Our teachers, therapists and Family Services team have been in regular contact with you to offer guidance and keep you updated. These conversations have given you an opportunity to share with us details of the support you would welcome at this time. Thank you to everyone for engaging so openly with us. Your feedback has been gratefully received and we are now acting upon it.

### Seashell Update

Whilst staffing levels have improved significantly from the levels we saw in mid-March, we still have a high number of contact staff who are unavailable for work and this, combined with the enhanced infection control and social distancing measures means that we are unable yet to return to full services.

We continue to support the children and young people who live all year round at Seashell Trust. In April, we undertook a detailed risk assessment of the children, young people and family needs and introduced a day service for a small number of students. The day service has been subject to availability of staff and has operated entirely independently of our residential service. It has been well received and we are continuing to deliver this service with a gradual increase in numbers, as staff capacity allows.

Our teachers and therapists are providing advice, support and intervention via technology for all children and young people remaining in their family homes and we will continue to do this.

Annual reviews have been taking place remotely and appear, on the whole, to be working well.

### Our Plans

I am sure that many of you will have watched the Prime Minister last Sunday evening outline what the next steps forward are for the country. While a great deal is being debated, there was an indication of what the Government is proposing for the re-opening of schools and guidelines are now emerging.

The Governments' current guidelines for special schools and special post-16 organisations indicate that we should be working towards welcoming back as many children and young people as we can safely support. This is very much in line with the way we have been working to date throughout the coronavirus crisis.

Our plan is a continuation of our existing approach that allows a gradual reintroduction of children and young people to Seashell Trust. It is based on the following key principles – it must:

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- Adhere to recent government guidelines
- Be informed by individual risk assessments for children, young people and family needs
- Take into account staff capacity
- Be underpinned at all times by infection control factors

We will continue to review risk assessments and will be in touch with you in due course to make suitable arrangements for your child's return to Seashell Trust, where it is safe to do so.

Around mid-June, we will increase the focus on transitions for both school and college leavers and helping students prepare to leave in line with their individual transition plans.

Our plan is for services to operate throughout the May half term break and continue to run until Friday 14<sup>th</sup> August 2020. For those children and young people who are due to finish school and college this year, this will mark the end of the transition period.

We have revised our summer holiday period which will now run for 2 weeks, from Saturday 15<sup>th</sup> August to Monday 2<sup>nd</sup> September 2020. During this period, we will continue to support those residents on a 45/48/52 week placement only. There will be no provision for day students, weekly residents or those on a 38-week placement during this 2-week period.

At this stage, we do not quite know what the position is from September onwards however; we will inform you as soon as the situation becomes clearer.

Essential maintenance of our buildings will take place during this time, and our community facilities will remain closed until further notice.

### Allocation of Buildings

In order to ensure the safety of children, young people and staff our residential service is restricted to our residences and college building, with the exception of the sensory building. We are continuing with our evening clubs for residents, which take place in the college sports hall.

Our day service for both school and college students will operate from the school building and forest school.

### Visitors' Protocols

We have no plans yet to change Seashell Trust's visitor protocols. We fully appreciate how difficult it has been for those of you whose children have remained on site and we thank you once again for your understanding and cooperation. We plan to review our protocols in line with government guidelines once the official period of shielding has come to an end on 30 June 2020. We kindly encourage you to continue to keep in touch with your children using available technology.

Finally, we will be launching a new YouTube channel, providing information on different approaches that you can try at home with your child. We will be in touch with further information early next week. For those children and young people who access our CADS programme we will be offering a virtual May Half Term CADS via our Facebook group – please request to join the Seashell Trust CADS group directly or contact [sports@seashelltrust.org.uk](mailto:sports@seashelltrust.org.uk)

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Please do not hesitate to contact our Family Services team, who are available to support you, or to contact one of the following key members of staff:

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I know that this has been a difficult time for us all. Thank you once again for all your support and understanding over recent weeks.

Our staff will remain in regular contact with you and I will share another update in June.

Please continue to look after yourselves and your families and stay in touch.

Yours sincerely,



Jolanta McCall  
Chief Executive and Principal

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