

## [Ark statement on school reopening](#)

### **Back to school safely: Ark's work on reopening schools**

Our focus has always been to ensure that all children, regardless of their background, have access to an excellent education and real choices in life.

The events of the past few months have made that task even more important. Lockdown and school closures have had profound effects on the education of many, particularly those already disadvantaged.

So it is essential that schools are fully opened, and as far as is possible, kept open. All of Ark's schools and staff are working hard to make sure our young people are safe, happy and confident in school this academic year.

Across the Ark network we have carefully followed government guidance for safe re-opening. Every school serves a unique community and each of our schools has individual plans matched to their needs and circumstances and all share a commitment to providing a calm and respectful environment in which all children can learn. Our teachers will be reminding all students of the behaviour expectations and the routines that allow us to run safe and welcoming schools on their return.

The Government's most recent guidance includes a commitment to close schools partially or wholly only in the most serious cases of recurrence of the virus at a local level. However, it is important that young people are able to continue their education at home – in case their school is closed as a result of the virus, in case they are required to self-isolate at home, or simply so that they can work independently outside of schools hours to consolidate and extend their learning.

We are therefore embarking on an ambitious digital strategy this autumn to ensure that all pupils have access to a device at home suitable for learning. An initial investment of under £2m will seek to provide a Chromebook to all pupils in Years 4 and 7, and to those most disadvantaged children across other year groups.

We also know, however, that students need more than digital devices – they need additional academic and pastoral support too. So we have devised assessment processes to identify gaps in children's knowledge and recruited more staff to provide catch-up classes and other support for those who need it. This has allowed us to hire increased numbers of trainee teachers as well as Graduate Teaching Assistants, providing roles for others who have been affected by the pandemic's impact.

In addition, we have invested in extra training for teachers and other staff on mental health and provided additional funding to our schools to ensure they can provide appropriate support for young people in need.

We are looking forward to welcoming our students back to school and are doing everything we can to ensure this is a productive and positive year of education for all of them.

[Lucy Heller – CEO Ark Academy Trust](#)