



Wednesday 20th May 2020

Dear Parents/Carers,

I seem to be speaking to many of you quite regularly at the moment, along with answering your questions on email, text and phone – and none of it is easy to write or makes for easy reading either!

In response to many of your questions I have also attached a frequently Asked Questions sheet to this letter – the honest truth is that you are the best person to make a decision about the safety of your child(ren) and your family should the Coronavirus impact on your homes, and we respect that. And I hope that the information in this letter and FAQs sheet allow you to make an informed decision.

Firstly, you will not be penalised for keeping your child(ren) at home in this unprecedented and difficult time. During this time we have, and will continued to, support all our families with meal vouchers, food deliveries, provide online learning and feedback, access to Special Needs support and other professionals, worked with families and Social Services to support our most vulnerable, make welfare calls across the whole school and responded to every email, text and call you have made to us. We will never be that far away – in fact we will be offering more support to those at home should you need it.

Our school is a small school with a small and dedicated staff that can't wait to see your children when you decide the time is right and safe. But, the reality is we will be unable to open to all children before the Summer holiday, every time we set up a new class 'bubble' of children and staff we loose another room and another set of staff. Under the Government's current proposals for Nursery, Reception, Year 1 and Year 6 we would need 14 classrooms at least and also maintain Key workers childcare, we have 8.

However, if you make the decision to return your child to school, when we finally reopen the school will be a very different place, a very different environment, and a very different experience.

You as parents will be aware that our school motto is 'Caring, Sharing, learning Together' and after almost 25 years at the school and almost 9 as Head teacher you know that I am so very proud of our school, our children and what we achieve. We strive to identify the potential and celebrate that in every child – no wonder I often call them 'treasures'. But after reopening our school will not be the school they left when we closed.

- Due to social distancing guidance children and staff will have limited contact.
- When children are upset we comfort them, we take their hand and lead them on when they need support, socially, emotionally and academically. Sadly, we are not going to be able to do this which goes against every grain of our being. The thought of a child being anxious about coming into school and not holding their hand to guide them in, allow parents to come into the building to settle, them goes against everything we stand for but this is what we must do for the safety of the whole community.
- We will need to stagger the start and finish times, stagger playtimes and lunchtimes, half the class sizes, organise children into smaller groups, keep them in those smaller groups for the whole time they are in school, not allow these groups of children to mix and to encourage social distancing with the children
- Learning for our youngest children would be without the choice that they would usually have as the only way that we could even contemplate social distancing would be to sit them at the desk. What 4, 5 or 6-year-old would be able to find enjoyment in that? Whilst we aim to provide Working at Stations that too will limit their choice and interaction.

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- Activities that children would complete would not follow the usual curriculum as we have been advised to remove any soft furnishing resources and those such as lego, toy cars, instruments etc would not be practical to have in the classroom as they would have to be cleaned thoroughly after each child has used them to minimise the spread of germs.
- Year 6 would not spend their last few weeks together, due to social distancing they would spend their time in at least 2 separate classrooms in order to maintain a distance of 2 metres.
- Children may not necessarily be looked after by their own teacher or work with their usual teaching assistant – we simply don't have the number of staff to maintain this whilst running such small social groups.
- Outdoor play wouldn't be with their friends but spent playing more in isolation as would lunch times and play times.
- It also presents issues for those families who have brothers and sisters in other year groups as the only year groups that the Government would like us to try and accommodate are Nursery, Reception, Year 1 and Year 6 at the minute.

Our Intentions

However, despite having said all of this, we are being asked to try and open our school and we will aim to do this – just as we have kept the school open for children of key workers for the last 2 months. We recognise that for some families and specific children this is what they need. But, our support for those that do not return will not diminish.

I hope you know myself and the school well enough by now to know that we will do our utmost to ensure the safety of all children in our care and to give them the best experience possible. There is still a huge amount of work to do behind the scenes with risk assessments, planning, building adjustments etc to achieve this.

To help us with these preparations, we have already sent several texts messages and a survey to assess if parents and carers require their children to return to school. I will repeat, as per my previous letter, this is totally optional – **there is no pressure on any parent or carer to send their child into school, there will be no non-attendance fines.**

Next Steps

Myself and the school team will contact each family in nursery, reception, year 1 and year 6 over the coming days to collect a final response before we make any final decisions on the way forward to reopen. It could well be that we feel that the numbers are too great and further decisions may need to be made about prioritising certain groups of children, year groups etc....

There are no definite answers here, from Government or County, and all of this may have to change should the infection rate fail to sufficiently decrease over the next few weeks.

The thought of gradually opening our school to an increasing number of children is really exciting for all of us but we want to ensure we do it safely and well managed – we cannot wait to have the school back to the happy, warm and welcoming place it should be. Equally we have to take one step at a time to ensure the safety of all.

I care passionately about the children, staff and the schools wider community and only want the very best for everyone, I do not wish this to be seen as negative but that you are able to make as informed a decision as possible. Thank you for your support, understanding and patience.

Best Wishes,

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