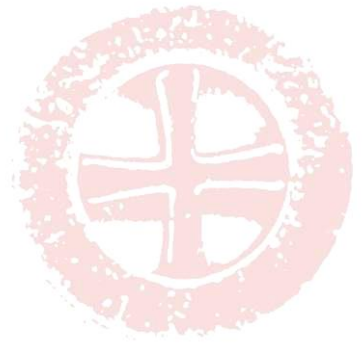


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Thursday 14 May 2020

Dear Parents,

I am sure you have seen the recent government announcements regarding the reopening of schools. In reality, we have never closed – we have supported children of key workers throughout every one of the last eight weeks. A better word than ‘reopen’ is ‘recovery’ as what might happen on 1 June will be the first step back into school, but will be far from ‘normal’.

To clarify, the government has suggested that assuming they are happy with the situation, from 1 June children from only Years R, 1 and 6 may return to school with an expectation that class groups do not exceed 15. Children of keyworkers will continue to be provided for too. This means that siblings in other year groups will not be allowed to attend. The government has made this decision. It is however parent’s choice whether they feel comfortable with their children returning and many will want to continue to ‘shield’ at home for lots of reasons (without fear that this absence will be questioned or fined).

I am sure your immediate thoughts regarding this announcement were the same as ours; whether it is safe to do this. It is unnatural for children to separate, as you know from how easily that they catch colds from each other every year, especially in our school where happy, cross age play is our primary strength. The question of whether schools will be ‘safe from the virus’ is not easy to answer. We have as a staff team been wrestling with trying to plan how best to approach this. I do not have all the answers yet; this is a difficult situation and staff are rightly concerned for the safety of children, for themselves and for what they might take home to their families.

Rest assured that when I am in a position to communicate our plan, it will put measures to promote the safety of children at the forefront. For example, this could lead us to stagger start and finish times, restructure the school day, isolate small sub-groups so that they do not ‘cross-contaminate’ and mix with others. We will also have to teach all of the children how to ‘be’ in school – the normal routines of lining up, going to the toilet, the freedom to see everyone, sharing resources and playing actively with others will not apply and they will have to be shown new ones. I won’t sugar coat the fact that school will feel very different for a while. This all has to be achieved with a reduced workforce as many members of

staff are required to shield at home for various reasons. Our small school also has a limited number of rooms available to house everyone as we try to spread out.

Whatever we plan for 1 June, will soon require change as the recovery steps forward. The government has outlined that at some point (this term) children from years 2, 3, 4 and 5 will also return and they will have to go through the same learning about how school is. The government could of course change course or move timescales at any point in response to how the virus has progressed.

All families I have had contact with, have praised the home-learning support we have put into place. Another of my concerns with returning on 1 June is that teachers will be working with the classes of 15 in-school so can't devote their time to supporting home-learning as they are now and I do not want to abandon Years 2,3,4 and 5 or those choosing to stay home. Staff cannot do two roles at the same time.

There is rather a lot of unhelpful media speculation muddled in with actual DfE guidance at the moment. If you want to know more, I would suggest going straight to the DfE publications, especially this guidance for parents/ carers:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/closure-of-educational-settings-information-for-parents-and-carers/reopening-schools-and-other-educational-settings-from-1-june>

I will communicate more next week but I hope you appreciate why I cannot yet outline what we intend to do. I hope to also ask parents next week, how many families in Years R,1 and 6 feel they would like children to return.

Kind Regards,



David Woolley