



25 February 2021

Dear All,

You will no doubt be aware of the Government's directive that schools are to open more widely to all pupils from 8 March 2021. We are very much looking forward to welcoming ALL the children back - we really have missed them! The notice the government have given us has meant that we are better able to ensure all preparations are in place and we are in the process of finalising these for each school.

Each school will be in touch with their families, well before 8 March, to explain how things will work on their site. Advice and guidance has changed since we first experienced a wider opening, and so you may find that some of the practical arrangements in your school have changed in some way. I would ask that you read any communication from your school carefully so that you are aware of how things will work and if you have any questions at all, please don't hesitate to contact your school and they will be able to help.

We will of course do all we can to continue to make our sites as COVID secure as we possibly can but cannot promise that we will be COVID *free*. We have done remarkably well so far and that has largely been due to the fabulous support we have had from you all. I know we're all experiencing a bit of "COVID fatigue" but we still need your help to ensure we can continue to support your children, your families and our staff and their families. There will be some things we ask you to do that you may either disagree with or can't see the point of. However, we need you to support us in helping keep us all safe. If we don't all continue to do our bit, we will find ourselves in a community with rising infection rates which could lead to bubble, and even school, closures. We know you don't want to have your children miss any more time in school so we would be grateful for your continued support with the arrangements we put in place.

Our staff will be expected to test regularly for COVID 19 and so too will our older children. *For those of you with children in years 7 and 8, there will be some school testing for pupils over the age of 11 only, in line with Public Health England advice.*

Children in Reception to Year 6 will **not** be expected to test.

It is clear that the government's intention that the majority of testing for children of this age will be carried out in homes. I do appreciate that this may be tricky for some of you and we do have staff in place to support you with this. However, it is vital that you do all you can to ensure you test regularly and report those results. We are putting procedures in place to make that easier. Your school will write to you to explain how this will happen but without your commitment to this, we may experience a spike in cases, again leading to closures.

Whilst we are looking forward to the proposed easing of lockdown procedures, we know this is reliant on the behaviour of the virus - I don't think the virus has put the 21st June in its diary! Therefore, we need to continue with all social distancing measures that are in place at present. The "Hands, Face, Space" message has never been so important. Please remind your children regularly about this. We will be asking adults, and secondary age pupils, to wear face masks on site. I completely understand that some folk find this tricky but it really does help to minimise risk. Your support with this is greatly appreciated and please don't be offended if we remind you of this rule. We're not trying to be difficult - we just want to make sure we do all we can to minimise risk.

I am deeply aware of all you have been doing since January to support your children's learning at home. We know it has been fine for some families - for others, the word "nightmare" doesn't cut it. First and foremost, I want to say a massive thank you for all you've done over the past months in a really trying situation. Your patience, resilience and hard work is hugely appreciated and I know will have helped to make sure that when your children return, they will be ready to join in classroom life again.

I know that many parents are worried about "catch up", "gaps" or "falling behind". Our experience of the return after the first lockdown has shown us that teachers are experts at identifying learning missed and helping the children cover them. We found that the children made excellent progress when the routine of the school day was back. Please don't worry - we'll sort the learning out.

Your children will be most successful if they feel confident, secure and supported. Before great "catch up" can happen, our staff will be working on helping the children understand and deal with the social and mental health aspects of lockdown. We know they've missed their friends, we know that they might be feeling anxious about coming back to school and we know it will take time "to get back into the swing of things" after being out of school for so long. Even those who have been in school, will find it different with their friends and peers joining them. It took a while to get used to being in lock down - it will take a while to get used to being back in school.

And I'm guessing, you as adults will find it strange as well. Some of you might really miss your kids not being with you. Even if you are looking forward to them being back at school, you'll have no doubt got used to a way of working that will upset the rhythm you've got into. It's important you give yourself time to get used to yet another "new normal". If you are at all concerned, your first port of call is your child's teacher. We're here to help and will do what we can.

The COVID statistics reported lately are leading us all to be hopeful that we can return to normal life soon. That looks likely if we continue to be vigilant and your support with that is massively appreciated. As ever, if you have any questions or concerns, please don't hesitate to get in touch.

Thank you again.

Sincerely,



Rhonda Moore

Chief Executive Officer