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Headteacher: Mr A Wright

Dear Parent/ Guardian,

As I have previously explained, finer details about the proposed expansion of pupil numbers are being worked on. There will be further details available by the end of the week but, for now, there are some things which I am sure it would be useful for parents to have a greater understanding of and a chance to consider.

It is perhaps prudent, at this moment, to reiterate that this is not an ideal situation for anybody and that, currently, we are working hard to find solutions to problems which have not been faced before. Nobody wishes for our normal school life to return more than 1, but we must find alternative ways of working for now.

Will my child be in their normal classroom, with their normal teacher?

Unfortunately, there will be no way to guarantee this and, for lots of pupils, it will definitely not be possible. This means that pupils may find themselves with different members of staff and pupils than usual, and in a different part of the building. As I am sure you can appreciate, there is simply no way for all pupils to be able to return to their normal classrooms and members of staff and, whilst I understand that this may be a wish for most parents, it will not be practicable to do this given the restraints that we are currently working to. We have cohorts of 37 pupils in each year group, meaning that we require at least five bubbles to cover all EYFS and Year 1 pupils alone. For some pupils, this may make the transition back into school more demanding, for others they may see it as an opportunity to work with someone new. For the time being, although difficult to accept, the concept of the traditional class needs to be shelved by all of us for now.

Why? The Government have asked us to ensure that pupils are re-grouped into bubbles of no more than 15, in order to reduce the risk of infection.

Will the children be kept 'socially distant'?

We are working to create a system where pupils from different bubbles do not mix. There may be odd occasions when they pass each other in school but, in the main, they will be kept separate **including during periods of play**. Within the bubbles, pupils **cannot and will not be expected to keep a two metre gap** from one another, although our Junior pupils in particular will be encouraged to think about personal space.



Why? Government guidelines make clear that 'early years and primary age children cannot be expected to remain 2 metres apart from each other and staff'. Instead, schools are asked to work through a 'hierarchy of measures' to reduce the risk within these groups:

- avoiding contact with anyone with symptoms
- frequent hand cleaning and good respiratory hygiene practices
- regular cleaning of settings
- minimising contact and mixing

In reality, this means that our reception and year 1 pupils will continue to mingle within their own bubble – pupils at this age naturally wish to interact in close proximity with one another and, to not allow them to do so, would reduce a large amount of the purpose of school at this young age. It is also difficult to envisage how teaching at this age may be achieved if a distant was set between all pupils. Most importantly, experience tells us that young pupils may understand the concept of keeping a distance but are unlikely to stick to it.

Junior pupils will work in 'spaced out' settings, but our classrooms would not allow for a distance of two metres between desks. Junior pupils will be encouraged to consider reducing close contact with others but, at playtimes, this is unlikely to be maintained. Any pupils who wish to keep distant at playtimes will be given an area to utilise in order to do so but pupils will, most probably, choose to continue to mingle within their own bubbles.

It is really important to consider, within any guidelines, what are realistic expectations that can be achieved. While staying two metres apart sounds fine on paper, experience tells us that children will be unable to maintain this and it will be impossible for staff to police this fully. This, as stated before, is reflected in the Government guidelines.

Will this bubble stay the same at all times?

Our aim is to keep the bubbles the same as much as possible, consisting of maximum 15 pupils and no more than two staff at once (some bubbles may have staff on a rota due to contracted hours). Children cannot be in more than one bubble, meaning that pupils of key workers will have their own mixed reception and year 1 bubble, in order to guard against those children needing to mix with more pupils than is necessary.

Why? As much as possible, we want to restrict the potential for transmission of the virus. This means keeping the same pupils and staff working together in a bubble as much as possible and, at this stage, staff not working with different bubbles unless it is absolutely necessary (such as due to illness). There, of course, may be occasions when small adaptations that may need to be made to this.

Will the curriculum be the same as before when the children return?

The school curriculum is likely to be different for a whole variety of reasons and the guidance makes clear that schools have the flexibility to take the best approach they consider fit. Creating a clearer idea of what can be taught, given the circumstances, is part of the ongoing staff discussions. We are also eager to continue to support those pupils who are not in school (of all ages) with home learning as much as we can, which has been a big part of our thinking.

Why? There are multiple reasons why the curriculum is likely to be very different:

- Pupils will not be in their original class, meaning that they cannot simply 'pick up where they left off'.

- Members of staff will need time to get to know where pupils are at. This could be to assess how their learning has fared since March, or to get to know them if they have not taught them before.
- There will be restrictions over some resources. It is not currently clear, for example, how reading books may be used safely without transmitting germs.
- There will be restrictions over teaching styles, taking into account attempts to reduce (but not stop) close contact between staff and pupils. This will mean that staff will need time to evolve their practice.
- The focus of the curriculum needs to be about providing security and stability for pupils in a challenging time. This **must** be the first aim, before 'academic' issues are focused on as pupils will not learn if they are not settled.

As has been previously stated, the decision to send any eligible pupils back to school rests with parents. It is important that, where the details and implications of this choice are available, they are considered carefully by parents so that you are comfortable with them. This is why, as a school, we are trying to come to a point where we can be as open as possible before we 're-open' but, as I am sure you can appreciate, some elements will be fine tuned as we move through the next few weeks.

I will continue to support parents in making the right call for their child. Please remember that further details will be released and that this is in answer to some questions that I am sure are on lots of minds at present.

Stay safe,

Mr Wright