

Tuesday 9th June 2020

Dear Parents and Carers,

You may have seen that Gavin Williamson, Secretary of State for Education confirmed in a statement to the House of Commons today that the government has reversed its “ambition” to get all primary school pupils back in school before the summer. Instead he said government will “continue to work with the sector on the next steps”, adding he would like to see “schools with capacity to bring back more children before summer if they’re able”.

As you know we have taken a cautious and pragmatic approach to the wider reopening of our schools. Pleasingly, this week we have welcomed back Year 6 children as well as a growing number of Key Worker children. This has been a result of our thorough training programme, hard work from staff and patience, understanding and support from you as parents. Thank you to everyone for this. It has been truly lovely seeing the children back in school and whilst it is fair to say that staff, children and parents have felt a little nervous about the return, things have gone smoothly so far. There have, of course, had to be some big changes from what school was like prior to the lockdown but everyone is quickly adapting to this.

With regards to ‘capacity to bring back more children before the summer’, as things stand, the biggest issue we face is the ability to staff each bubble. We have a number of staff shielding due to personal health issues/protected characteristics or health issues/protected characteristics of family members in their household. Additionally, classes are now split into smaller bubbles, each with a maximum of 15 children. We are staffing each bubble with two staff members as we feel that this is key to ensuring children and adults are safe. Taking these factors into account, we are faced with the reality of running out of staff to run bubbles and space to house them before long. This will mean that it is wholly unlikely that we will have capacity to bring back more children than those specified before summer.

As promised in our original plan, tomorrow we will review our ability to welcome the next year group (Year 1) back to school. This will be communicated to parents of Year 1 children in a letter on Wednesday 10th June. We will assess if:

- children are happy and learning
- our full risk assessment has been positively reviewed
- there is no significant rise in incidents of coronavirus across the school
- staffing and room capacity allows

Going beyond that, we are keen to fulfil our initial plans of inviting Reception and then Nursery children back in subsequent weeks. However, we need to be realistic. Given the current staffing arrangements detailed above, we would need to change the staffing measures currently in place (two per bubble), this will be considered in the coming week. We know that any deviation from our plan would be hugely frustrating for some of you but ask that you understand any changes to these plans will be unavoidable and will be made in the best interests of your child and their safety.

In the meantime, the government have reaffirmed that remote learning is its main strategy to support children’s learning whilst they are not physically in school. We know that working from posted plans, watching staff on video and talking to their teacher on the phone is just not the same but we will continue to do the very best we can to support you and your children. We are here for you whenever you need us and do hope you will continue to get in touch.

James Roach – CEO, Inclusive Multi Academy Trust
Jess Bruce – Headteacher, Cherry Tree School
Gillian Jackson – Headteacher, Beechfield School
Sebastian Gray – Headteacher, Laurance Haines School