

“Here to make a difference”



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Dear Parents/Carers

We hope that this letter finds you safe and well.

Thank you very much for all your support over the last few months, our team really appreciate your kindness. The staff have been amazing and are an incredible team.

Regarding potential partial re-opening on or after June 1st 2020:

There is a lot of information still to process and plans to be made – much National Guidance is added to or amended daily. We are not currently planning the opening of school for Year 2,3,4 and 5. This is still a long way off and we will want to evaluate how things go first for Nursery, Reception, Year 1 and Year 6. There is also no guarantee that school will re-open on 1st June as this is still under review by the Government and Unions.

Having met with the Governing Body on 19th May 2020, and due to increased requests for Key Worker Childcare places, the decision has been taken to introduce Y6 first, as these pupils are our eldest and should be most adaptable to social distancing requirements in school. Governors have then stipulated that we will monitor the situation closely but aim to bring Y1 pupils in after that (but no date has yet been confirmed). Governors will not make any firm decision on introducing the very youngest pupils back into school (Reception and Nursery) until it is safe to do so in terms of risk assessment, staffing capacity and health & safety of staff and children.

In order to keep children and staff as safe as possible we will be taking some stringent measures in school if we open on 1st June and we would not be being truthful if we did not say that we worry about the possible negative effects these measures could have on your children. Some parents are of the view that returning to school will have a positive effect on well-being, but we are not convinced this will always be the case. It is important that we are as honest as possible about these measures, so that you can make an informed choice. School has been open to children of critical workers who have had no choice but to use the school as childcare. We would like to thank those parents and all other critical workers for everything you are doing in these difficult times. We will remain open to these children but we ask again that you only use this service as a last resort. All the staff would love to see our school return to how it was before Covid-19 but that is simply not possible at the moment. We all miss the learning and laughter that we were so used to, alongside the assemblies and socialising that were possible. Until this can happen though, school will be a very different place and we wanted to outline some of the key changes that will need to happen.

Drop offs and collections will be staggered and only one parent will be able to drop off. DfE Planning Guidance indicates that parents and carers should not enter the building or grounds at all, nor congregate at the school gate prior to or after drop off. This is very different to our usual way of welcoming everyone onto the site in a morning and will take some precise planning. Due to room limitations and staffing we will need to split our Nursery, Reception, Year 1 and Year 6 into smaller groups (or bubbles). The Government have stated a maximum number of 15. Ideally it will be much lower, to reduce the risk of infection spreading. If we go above these numbers, the children will only be

able to attend school part time. Where possible, as per the DfE Planning Guidance document, unnecessary furniture and all soft furnishings will be removed from the classroom. Children will have to be more independent in their learning as staff will not be able to sit with them to help with work. We will not be concentrating on academic teaching and trying to 'catch the children up'. Activities will be more open ended and concentrate on wellbeing. Ideally children will be with a member of staff for the day. This may not be their class teacher and they may not be in their usual room. Children will not be able to mix with children in other classrooms/bubbles. The school will have a one-way system with corridors split in half. Ideally children will sit at desks/floor spots that are 2 metres apart. Depending on numbers of pupils returning to school, these 2 metres cannot be guaranteed. The 2 metre recommended distancing measure cannot be guaranteed in any case. Lunches will be eaten in classrooms and we will not be serving any hot meals. The school kitchen will be providing packed lunches for free school meal children (including universal free school meals). Other children will still be able to bring a packed lunch into school. A packed lunch and a coat (if the weather requires) are the only things a child can bring to school. DfE Guidance clearly states that no reading books, pencil cases etc will be allowed. When playing outside, the children must keep apart and they will not be allowed to play on any of the outdoor equipment. It has been recommended that these are cleaned afterwards, and we will not have the available staff to do this. The children will be provided with a zip pocket of basic equipment that will be for them only. If a pupil or staff member in one of the 'bubbles' tests positive for Covid19, or has symptoms, the whole bubble of children and adults will be required to isolate for 14 days. Sadly, we will not be having a Year 6 leavers' show this term and Transition Visits to secondary schools are extremely unlikely to occur. There will be no Sports Days or other whole school events. We will be having no assemblies.

We will greet the children in the morning with smiles and a warm welcome. We will keep them as safe as possible while doing our utmost to give them activities that keep them engaged. Although we will need to discuss the reasons for school being such a different place, we will not let the virus be the main focus of what they do. It is not our intention to alarm parents, but it is important that you have a clear picture of what school will be like if we open on 1st June. These measures will be put into place to keep your children and school staff as safe as possible and to try and limit the spread of the virus. None of this is what any of us want and writing this letter has been hard. We understand that this may be upsetting but it is necessary.

Parents and carers with pupils in the identified year groups will receive a text message later this week. This will be to ask if they intend to send their child back to school if we do re-open to their particular year group on or after 1st June. The responses, once collated, will inform our planning further. Please note: if you choose not to send your child back to school yet because you have safety concerns, you will not incur any fines relating to non-attendance.

Take care and stay safe,
Mrs Addison Headteacher

Governing Body, Benfieldside Primary School.