

“Here to make a difference”



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Head teacher: Mrs C Addison

22<sup>nd</sup> May 2020

Dear Parents and Carers,

We hope that you all remain safe and well. We want to begin by thanking you again for your support and cooperation since school closed to the majority of children on March 20th. We know that it has been a difficult time juggling family responsibilities, home learning and home working but our whole school staff have appreciated the efforts that you have all made to ‘stay at home, to keep safe and to protect the NHS’.

We have remained open for some children throughout this period, including during school holidays in order to support Key Workers. Staff will again be working through half term to provide this vital cover (with the exception of Bank Holiday Monday).

We wrote to you on May 20<sup>th</sup>, after the Prime Minister’s announcement on Sunday 10th May, about the potential re-opening of schools on June 1st. We have to be honest and let you know that over the last week we have been swamped with guidance from Durham LA, the Department for Education and from Unions. Today we also received SAGE guidance regarding the potential risks relating to the return of some cohorts of pupils to school. We have been working our way through a mountain of risk assessments and practicalities. However, with each day advice has changed or guidance has been updated. Decisions are being made on staffing numbers, building capacity and risk assessments. We appreciate the wait for clarity must be extremely frustrating for you.

We are in the process of completing the risk assessment and procedures for staff, pupils and parents whilst considering Government, Local Authority and Union advice. As I am sure you can appreciate there is a huge amount of information to wade through, which in turn leads to practical changes on the ground.

The sole responsibility of choosing to reopen the school lies with the Head Teacher and Governing body. We must be assured that when we reopen, we can in a way that protects not only the children and staff but their wider families. During the day today, members of the Governing Body and members of the Leadership Team have considered the following:

- the SAGE report published 22/5/20
- that we are located in the region with the largest current rate of infection.
- the discrepancies between advice/guidance from various sources.
- the views of staff and parents/carers
- the mental and physical well-being of the children in our school.
- the health of staff, children and their families

Taking these points into consideration, we do not at present feel able to widen the school offer from the 1st June. We need to make more preparations to ensure the environment and class rooms are adjusted to accommodate social distancing, ensure we have the right amount of stock for cleaning and hygiene until the end of term. Governors will be meeting again during week beginning 1<sup>st</sup> June, to review the situation and decide whether to extend our school offer to a wider number of children, beginning with Y6. It is unlikely that we will open more widely until 15<sup>th</sup> June, at the earliest. We will write to you with an update after this meeting.

We are very much putting safe and measured plans in place to be able to provide a wider opening, when ready. **But, will not be reopening on Monday the 1st June.**

Best wishes and stay safe,

Mrs Addison Headteacher

Benfieldside Primary Governing Body