



Tuesday 28th May 2020

### **A letter to all parents – a framework for the partial re-opening of school**

Dear Parents and Carers,

I wrote to parents recently detailing the government's plans for the gradual reopening of schools. At the same time, we asked parents to contact the school if their child was in one of the targeted year groups (Yr6, Yr1, Reception or Nursery) and to let us know how they were feeling about their child returning to school and whether they would be requiring a place.

Of the parents who responded and contacted us at school, it was clear there are still huge reservations about the re-opening of schools locally and nationally. Many of you would prefer at this time to keep your child at home with you and we respect that choice. Nevertheless, there were also some parents who indicated that they would be wanting their child to return once school re-opens.

Virtually every day since the Prime minister's announcement, there has been new guidance documents released, as well as a lot of speculation and comment nationally and locally in media and on social media. I, like other headteachers across the country, have worked closely with the local authority, leaders of other Oldham schools and our school staff and governors to create a framework to gradually reopen school in the coming weeks. This has been a very challenging time, as there is no precedent for such an event and the expectations and guidance has not always been the clearest, with lots of factors impacting on how schools can plan to reopen.

As a result, you will see vast differences in the next few weeks in how different schools respond to the government's plans. The framework that we have put in place is the best for Beever Primary, with the resources and space that we have at our disposal.

When planning and discussing the potential reopening of schools, the guidance from the local authority has centred around 4 key principles:

1. Safety, Safety, Safety.
  2. Safe solutions will look very different in each school. You all face unique challenges.
  3. A gradual and phased return will in most instances be a sensible approach. The aim is to open safely, rather than quickly.
  4. The attendance of vulnerable children and the children of critical workers should continue to be prioritised.
- These four principles have been at the forefront of any planning we have done so far and any of the potential decisions that we make.

We now feel that we have a plan in place that begins to allow for the gradual reopening of school when it is deemed safe to do so.

As things stand, this is the **8th June** for Year 6 pupils, with children in other year groups returning gradually after this date. It is worth repeating again that these dates may change based on updated guidance from central or local government; the staffing levels available to work in school or rises in infection locally. **There are no plans to open for the nursery children in the present environment.**

The attendance of critical workers is a key principle that could affect future planning. Our numbers in school have been fairly consistent over the course of the closure but, as we begin to emerge from the tightest restrictions, we anticipate that this will rise. If the numbers of critical workers rises drastically in the coming weeks, then school may not have the capacity or staffing to re-open for all of the year groups stated, using the guidance for social distancing and grouping that has been advised.

I would also like to stress to parents that whilst we are desperate to welcome children back to school, the school experience will look very different when the children return. As things stand, the children that are returning will be taught and will stay in bubbles of up to 10 with a teacher or teaching assistant. This will mean that some children will be taught by unfamiliar teachers in unfamiliar classrooms. We will do all that we can to make the children's time in school as 'normal' as possible, but parents must also understand that this simply won't be possible all of the time.

There are a number of measures we have put in place to ensure that school can reopen when it is safe to do so. These include:

- Opening 4.5 days a week and closing at 12.00pm on a Friday to all but critical worker children so that teachers can continue to provide online learning and plan and prepare without leaving their 'bubble', as well as allowing an additional thorough clean of the school building.
- Staggering the start and end of the school day.
- Staggering playtimes and lunchtimes.
- Only providing packed lunches and not using the hall.

Also available on the website is a document of guidance for parents which details further some of the changes that will be happening and some of the measures that we have put in place. I realise that this may not answer all of the questions that parents have but I want to make things as clear as I possibly can do in the current situation.

As it states in the guidance, our plan only works if we can maintain our current staffing levels. At this point, I would like to say a huge thank you to all of the staff for their dedication and hard work throughout the school closure. They have worked tirelessly to provide continued learning opportunities for all children whilst at home and have put themselves at risk on the frontline by coming to school as we remained open for critical workers. Their dedication and efforts will be even more evident as the school begins the process of reopening and I will do everything to ensure that they and their families remain safe, as well as your children and your families.

Further information for schools and parents is being released all of the time and I will make sure that this continues to be shared with parents. Schools are now in a position where we require further information from parents in order that we can safely prepare for the reopening of school. Can I ask ALL parents in Reception, Year 1, Year 6 who have not already done so and any children that may fall under the 'critical worker' category to contact school to inform us as to whether a school place will be required for their child. I will then write out to parents informing them nearer the time of the arrangements for their particular children.

Although the light at the end of the tunnel is getting a little brighter, there are huge logistical and practical issues in operating a school with the restrictions that are still in place and the safety of our whole school community is paramount. The plans we have drawn up are flexible and will be reviewed against our risk assessment on a daily basis. Anything that jeopardises the safety of any in our school community will lead to an instant review of our plans.

Please be patient with us, this is a new way of life for all of us, and we are all learning as we go along.

Please rest assured that, as a school, we are doing everything we can to ensure the safety of your families and our staff. We thank you in advance for your support and patience.

Yours,

Mr. G. Oates  
Headteacher