



## **School Announcement on Return to School for Some Children**

Dear Parents/Carers

As you will be aware, I contacted you all via School Spider email on Tuesday 12<sup>th</sup> May 2020 after speculation in the press regarding school reopening. We have had a couple of potential re-start dates since then but nothing authorised by Lancashire County Council.

Today, as promised, I am writing following Lancashire County Council's confirmation, to let you know how the Government announcement and instruction will look in our school for your children. We will be starting Phase 2 of re-opening on Monday 22nd June 2020.

The 'Return to School Plan' that accompanies this correspondence will outline how school will look for everyone as Lancashire County Council have confirmed that;

***‘.it is time to move to step two to open school to more children- in Reception, Year 1 and Year 6’.***

The last months have proved incredibly challenging for us all. I am fully aware of how the national emergency regarding coronavirus has impacted everyone in many different ways and for each of us there have been varied emotions and difficulties. Indeed all our contexts and worries are different and can often be unknown to each other. I am certainly aware of this fact. I have nothing but admiration for all of our children and families in how you have managed to support each other and our school in many different ways **despite** the challenges of life.

During the school closure for the majority of children, through working together, we have continued to support all of our children and families in many ways and ensured weekly communication with you all. This period of very different school has only confirmed the very special community we have and the wonderful children who make up our school. So the first thing I would like to do is say **thank you** all for your incredible support. In particular, I want to thank the children for their continued amazing attitudes during these unprecedented times.

In moving forward we will need to work together and offer each other support even more. Indeed, the last 2-3 months have only been the start of a journey that we must walk together. I can assure you, that the Governors, Staff and I only have the best interests of you and your children at the centre of anything we do as a school.

## **Current context**

Before reading how the Government decisions will impact our school, I feel it is very important to remind parents and carers of the current context.

Prior to school closure for the majority of children ( during the initial outbreak of the pandemic) school had a risk assessment and set of key procedures in place to decrease the risk of spread of coronavirus. This was particularly applicable in the months leading up to school closure.

Since school closure to the majority of children on March 20th, school has been running effectively and successfully looking after key worker and valuable children **every week day** including the Easter holiday and February half-term. This has normally been between 2-8 children each day accessing their own learning zone with two staff members. We have seen a slight increase in demand over the last three weeks. Overall, every week of closure has seen at least 10% of our school population successfully back in school.

During closure to the majority of children, school has always been open. All **staff have reported to be happy to work** in the school environment and children and families of key worker and valuable children have been **very happy with the care and the environment provided**. I have received this feedback via the parents of children in school themselves upon pick up, drop off and via email. All staff and children have worked within the Government guidance since Monday 23rd March 2020.

Whilst considering this plan, as a member of society with young children who has worked throughout the current pandemic, it is very important to stress I am totally aware of the emotion and feelings from a variety of people. I understand and respect the different views held within the many sections of society. I would like to stress that opinion is wide and varied and it would not be accurate to suggest that any one person is completely right in either how they feel about the situation **or** negate how they feel school should respond.

However, it is our belief as a school that following **Lancashire County Council advice** that starting to open school to more children is something we should do when **LCC say** it is **safe** and correct to do so. The plan outlined in our 'Return to School Plan' will show how that will look for our school.

It is important to start to open our society, providing care for children and ensuring economic growth to support our public services and people's jobs. In doing this, we will enable the support needed for everyone and crucially ensure we have an NHS to provide the healthcare needed to come through this pandemic.

It is worth considering that it is **widely reported** and **accepted** by our Government that the coronavirus will be with us for at least the next 12 months if not longer and we should now adjust our lives to work around this. It is also worth highlighting that as a parent, educator

and school leader, I understand and believe that schools play an important part in the health and well-being of children and their families in so many ways. Therefore having children in school ***whenever possible*** is something I believe to be crucial for them and our society.

The Government has requested me as a Headteacher of our school to formulate a plan alongside Governors and senior leadership to follow their guidance to open school. I have followed this guidance very closely and taken my lead from Lancashire County Council. Our plan has the **unanimous agreement** of the **staff, Governors** and **Local Authority**. The plan fulfils the Government criteria.

It is my opinion that our plan delivers. It delivers the Government request to return to school. More importantly, it delivers for our children, families and staff. I advise that the plan should be read alongside all Government guidance that can be found through a Google search for Gov.uk.

As you consider the plan, please bear in mind that schools are ***unique*** places. I 'd like to offer my complete assurances to you that I only ever have the best interests of your children at the centre of my decision making. We are fortunate to have a great team of staff who are talented, caring and nurturing and I can assure you all, they only have the best interests of children and their families at the centre of everything they do. There can never be a totally risk free world, especially from illness. We can only ever reduce risks as best as possible.

Our Phase 2 bubbles are based on the confirmed interest from parents and carers expressed back in May. If your child falls into the eligible groups and you have changed your mind about wanting a place, please contact school.

Finally, as a mother, Headteacher and general member of society, I wish to reiterate that I am fully aware that the decision to open schools to more children brings with it much emotion. I want to reassure you that as a school we are here for you and your children in any situation. I hope you will all see that our plan allows our school to open to more children if and when the Government and Lancashire County Council decide to do so.

Warmest regards

*Joanne Maher*

**Headteacher**