



Thursday 21st May 2020

Dear Parents and Carers,

I hope that you and your family are well and finding some time to enjoy the glorious sunshine.

Thank you for taking the time to respond to our request for information and sharing your thoughts, following the Prime Minister's announcement about the plans for opening schools to more pupils from 1st June. The school governors met last night and I want to give you an update about our current thinking.

I know that there are many different views of the government's plan and many of you have shared your concerns with us. The governors have the wellbeing of pupils and staff at the forefront of their decision making and they are clear that small, considered steps are required to make the return to school as safe as we can for everybody. We know that the situation is changing on a daily basis and any plans we make are subject to change in response to a range of factors.

We are working hard planning for re-opening: there is a lot to do and 'school' will be very different for the children who return. More information will be shared as we develop our plans, so that parents and carers can make an informed decision about if they wish their child to return to school. Please remember that the government has clearly said that no parent who chooses to continue home learning will be fined.

The guidance from the Department for Education recognises that 'early years and primary children cannot be expected to remain 2m apart from each other and staff'.

Schools are expected to put in place 'protective measures', namely:

- Avoiding contact with anyone with symptoms
- Frequent hand cleaning and good hygiene practices
- Regular cleaning
- Minimising contact and mixing

However, the governors at The Ridge, in line with Local Authority risk assessment, view implementing social distancing, as much as we can, as a key factor in allowing the school to open to more pupils. Our small classrooms and fitted furniture will therefore limit capacity of the number of children who will be able to return under the current social distancing guidance issued by Public Health England.

Governors have therefore agreed the following approach.

Priority 1 - meeting the need for increased requirement for childcare, where key workers are unable to work from home, and for our 'vulnerable' children. We will need to change our current approach to childcare as we cater for more children and develop separate small groups or 'bubbles'.

Childcare will be closed to all children on Monday 1st June for staff training.



Priority 2 - Inviting Year 6 back to support their transition to secondary school. This is the year group who will more clearly understand social distancing. There will need to be a thorough risk assessment, detailed procedures and staff training before these pupils are invited back into school. This work is on going but we can tell you that the children will be in groups of between 4 to 6, seated 2m apart in separate classrooms. Each group will be led by an adult (Teacher or TA) and they will operate as a 'bubble', avoiding contact with other 'bubbles'. Further details, including when this will begin and the arrangements for staggered starts and finishes will be shared once they have been worked up. As yet, we do not have a firm date when we will start welcoming Year 6 back but we do know that this will not be on 1st June. We hope to open as soon as feasibly possible. Please note that when we do return, school will be closed to Year 6 every Wednesday afternoon to allow for additional cleaning.

We have carefully assessed the capacity of our school building for the number in childcare and pupils returning to school. Once that number is reached, we will be unable to have any more children on site. We anticipate that by the time we meet the demand for increased childcare and invite Year 6 back, it is unlikely, under the current social distancing guidelines from Public Health England, that we will have capacity for any additional pupils in Years 1 or Reception. We are looking at capacity in Kindergarten as a separate entity.

To be clear, under the present guidance we are unable to safely return pupils from Reception and Year 1 to school at the current time. However, this will be kept under review.

What Happens Next?

- Preparation to increase childcare provision for key workers and vulnerable children
- Review of Kindergarten provision
- Review of home learning offer for all year groups but especially to ensure provision for Year 6 aligns as closely as possible with learning in school.

Year 6 Offer

- Further work to put detail into the plans, write risk assessment and procedural guidance for staff, preparation of rooms, order of required hygiene supplies and additional equipment.
- Information shared with governors to sign off plans and agree a start date
- Information shared with parents of Year 6 pupils
- Confirmation of pupils in Year 6 wishing to return to school

I will of course, let you know how this work is progressing as appropriate. In the meantime, thank you for your ongoing support, which has really sustained us during these challenging times.

Yours sincerely

Mrs D A Hudson
Headteacher