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DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL
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Friday 22nd May 2020

Letter for parents/carers of children in Reception, Year 1, Year 6 and key workers

Dear Parents/Carers

Following a virtual governors meeting yesterday afternoon, I am writing to confirm that the wider reopening of our school for children in Reception, Year 1 and Year 6 will go ahead but from **Monday 8th June rather than 1st June**. I am sorry for any inconvenience this change of date might cause however myself and governors feel this is the right decision for the following reasons:

- There are a vast number of measures we need to put in place to ensure our school is ready to safely welcome increased numbers of children and staff back to school. These include the ordering of a range of materials and resources, such as PPE equipment for staff (in case they need to administer First Aid or support children who are unwell), lidded bins, increased disinfectant, soap, paper towels, signage for around school, to name but a few. We have ordered all of these, however due to current demand nationally, the delivery of some of these can't be guaranteed by 1st June. Clearly the safety of pupils and staff is of paramount importance to us; we would not open until we know we have everything we need to be able to meet all requirements on the detailed risk assessment we will be following.
- We need to make changes to our school environment (inside and outside) to ensure social distancing measures can be adhered to by visiting adults and to support pupils with social limiting. This is something we need time to do properly as it is important it is right. This will be a key focus for staff the week beginning 1st June.
- We also feel having another week with just a small number of pupils in school, would be sensible, given the rate of infection in the North East is higher than many places nationally.

I also need to point out that our agreed date of 8th June could depend on some factors that are out of our control, for example further announcements from the government, DfE, a change to the R level or factors that influence our staffing capacity.

Note for parents/carers who are key workers

Although our planned date for the wider reopening of school is now 8th June rather than 1st June, child care for your children will not be affected. We can continue with the slightly longer hours we have been able to offer until 8th June. From 8th June the hours for your children will be 8.45 start and 3.15 collection.

There are some parents in Year 6 who are still undecided about whether they wish to send their children back to school. Therefore I have included a summary below of the main provisions we will be making. I then ask that a definite decision is reached please. This is necessary so I can plan groupings and ensure staffing requirements to support with the number of children we will have in school. ***I will send a text to these parents and ask that a YES or NO reply is received by the end of the day on Tuesday 26th May. If we don't receive a reply we will assume the answer is NO.***

Summary of key provision we will be making

- Most children will be in groups of 10 or below. Older children might be placed in groups of 15 or below, depending on classroom size and a risk assessment of the space available.
- Children will not always be socially distant from everyone in their group/bubble – whilst children will sit separately whilst working, there will be occasions when children will be nearer than 2m to each other. We feel constantly reminding young children to stay apart could affect their emotional well being and make them feel on edge. We will therefore ensure social limiting by groups/bubbles not interacting with each other and will explain and discuss the concept of a protective 'bubble' to children. This is line with DfE guidance that acknowledges individual social distancing in school, especially with primary aged pupils, is not always possible.
- Continued regular and thorough hand hygiene will be practised in school, by children and staff.
- Increased and regular cleaning throughout the school day and a deeper clean once a week.
- Staggered start and end to the days so social distancing is possible for parents/carers when children are dropped off and picked up from school.
- Children will enter school through different doors/entrances.
- Playtimes and lunchtimes will be staggered so children in different bubbles don't mix.
- We will have as much outdoor learning as possible.
- Children will eat lunch in their classrooms (school meals can be provided).
- We have procedures in place in case a child or staff member displays symptoms of coronavirus when they are in school.
- There will be restrictions on what children can bring into school from home, eg, no school bags and if packed lunches are brought in from home, they must be in packaging that can be thrown away, rather than a packed lunch box that goes back and forward to school.
- Children will be asked to wear clean clothes every day (school uniform doesn't have to be worn – we suggest comfortable clothes that would be good for any sporting activities as children won't get changed for any PE lessons).

We cannot of course guarantee that children will not catch the virus at school – it is impossible to eliminate every risk. However, we will do all we can to ensure all children are safe, well and happy in school. The discussion between school leaders and governors yesterday afternoon was robust in checking our plans and risk assessments are thorough, follow DfE and Local Authority advice and cover everything that is needed.

We are pleased with systems we have had for key worker children and how effective these have been so far. We therefore feel we can learn from these systems, as we gradually welcome more children back into school. We understand what a difficult and worrying time this is for everyone but hope this can be the tentative first steps back to some kind of normality and an enjoyment of school life again for your children.

I will write again on Monday 1st June with full details of all procedures and information parents/carers need to know, if their child is returning to school from 8th June. This will confirm staffing, staggered start and end times and should answer any other questions you may have.

Thank you for your continued support during this difficult and unprecedented time.

With our very best wishes

H Sutherland

Mrs Helen Sutherland

Head Teacher

J Walsh

Mr James Walsh

Chair of Governors