

Friday 19<sup>th</sup> June 2020



**An update from the CEO on behalf of all schools**

Dear Parents and Carers,

I hope that you are all well.

Whilst we have welcomed back more children across our schools (and this has been wonderful for us all), we are very mindful that we have many other children who aren't back in school with us. The heaviness of that inequality weighs on all of our minds. We are trying as much as possible to balance the logistics of still trying to maintain full engagement with those children at home through our online distance learning and keep the connectivity going as we try to navigate the challenge of harmonising both distance learning and school learning. We do appreciate how patient you are in supporting all our staff teams with this challenge and they are indeed stretched.

We continue to endeavour to do our very best to support all our children both at home and at school and I am truly proud to work with such hardworking individuals who are going above and beyond to make this all work. If you get the opportunity to give your schools a positive boost in social media or to your neighbours, this is always greatly appreciated and a huge motivator for them to have that supportive recognition. Equally if things aren't quite right, they will want to know to try and improve things if they can, so please have an informal chat so we can try to help. We do appreciate the extended period of home-learning will be taking its toll and we're so pleased at the wonderful engagement in our distance learning all our parents and carers have shown and indeed how you are supporting each other through this as well.

As I write this we still do not have a position on what September will look like. We are spending considerable time planning for what we are 'guessing' will be the most likely position, anticipating a move to '1m distancing' and a continuation of stringent protective measures, but we simply don't know with any certainty and we are concerned if information comes to us all very late.

There are a number of implications if we still have to remain as vigilant as we are with the protective measures, so of course we need to have some sort of flexible approach to scenario planning for children returning in September. We will await any further updates and we have appealed to government to give us good notice of what will be in place, so we can plan in good time and so families can plan as well.

As well as safety, we are planning a really focused approach to our curriculum to support children when they do return and we are confident our plans will support children to review and build on prior learning and help them remember, as well as address any gaps of what we haven't taught them. We do not intend to narrow the curriculum as we know children need a breadth of knowledge and learning and will need the arts, PE and creativity as much as ever. We will however give close attention to those really crucial concepts in core subjects and invest quality time in reviewing and visiting these. Everyone is in the same boat, but children are resilient and will make great gains again with a structured and cohesively planned curriculum.

We are truly saddened for those children transitioning out of primary school onto high school and our new starters coming in who may all have a very different transition from normal. Schools have their own creative approaches to this in ensuring a smooth transition, but we fully recognise it is not what we would hope to offer. We will do our best to make it special for them all, even if they aren't actually in school and if we can't arrange for our new intakes to visit us.

We continue to work with other local schools across the area, supporting each other with the most stringent safety protocols and risk assessment review and parents can feel reassured that we are taking a very careful and measured approach to opening more widely.

Given the spaces in our schools, to follow the 2m rule and the staffing limitations we have, there is genuinely limited scope in most of our schools being able to introduce many more children from other year groups. We are considering closely where this is possible but in deciding on one year group we then disadvantage another. In introducing additional year-groups we also introduce more siblings in different bubbles and so on. Logistically most of our schools simply don't have the space or staff. We are so sorry about this.

Schools are making their own local decisions about increasing pupil numbers but with much discussion and deliberation. We have agreed to prioritise the most vulnerable learners and families and our Pupil Premium children where schools are able to increase numbers in any way. We appreciate again this is a further source of concern – we share that concern with you.

I'm sorry not to update you with anything more but I did want to touch base again with my extended thanks for your continued support and some further detail about the challenges we face and the lack of information we have to plan; we recognise there will likely be an update tonight on what the government is going to offer to support things for parents such as catch-up.

We wish you all well – stay safe everyone.

With all best wishes,



Mrs D. Moulds  
CEO