



Monday 18<sup>th</sup> May 2020

Dear Parents,

**Potential re-opening of schools for Nursery, Reception, Year1 and Year 6 Pupils and Continued Provision for children of Critical Workers**

I hope this finds you all safe and well. This letter is especially pertinent to children in the year groups listed above but I would encourage all parents to read this so that you are aware of our approach following the government's announcement that schools should plan to re-open on 1<sup>st</sup> June.

So far here at Barrow Hedges, throughout this pandemic, we have dealt with what we know, rather than any speculation, and we have responded to changes as they have occurred. I am sure that there are anxieties for children, parents, staff and governors and each concern is a valid concern. What I know at the moment, following government direction, is that we have to make preparations for our school to open for Nursery, Reception, Year 1 and Year 6 children, but not their siblings.

You will probably know that we have been open for children of critical workers during the lockdown from the 23<sup>rd</sup> March, including through the school holidays and the May Bank Holiday. This provision will continue for this group of children. The staff team have been limited to working on a rota to ensure that there was minimised contact between one another throughout this time. This has enabled the social mix to be limited. Looking forward in time to the potential of opening in June for more children presents schools with significant challenges to keep social distancing at appropriate levels. However, due to the government announcement, I am required to make plans for more children to come to school.

Since last Sunday, I have been working with the rest of the senior leadership team, and the leaders of the other schools within our Trust, and also in liaison with colleagues within the borough to discuss the reopening of schools. I am sure you will appreciate that there is a great deal to consider – the safety and wellbeing of all concerned is paramount.

The Trust has carried out risk assessments and we are currently working out staff ratios, social distancing space in classrooms and in our outdoor space, lunch arrangements, access arrangements and dropping off and picking up times, to name but a few; all of which will rely on



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having precise information. One extra unexpected child might not be able to fit into a class where we plan to aim for social distancing measures.

Just as we have a lot to plan for, I recognise that you will have a lot to consider and therefore I must share with you the following information so that you can make an informed decision about whether or not your child will return to school. The following gives you an insight into our plans and each accounts for government guidance:

- We will be placing children into groups of no more than 15 and they will be staying in this group, known as a 'bubble,' throughout the day.

- Each bubble will have two adults supervising them. There is no guarantee that your child will have their usual teachers and teaching assistants.

- Due to the number of bubbles we have to form, we will be using a range of classrooms across the school. Of course, we need to use double the amount of rooms than usual so children will not necessarily be in their familiar learning environment.

- Children of critical workers, who have been attending school during the closure, will remain with this group. Siblings will also be grouped together.

- While we all recognise that social distancing with primary aged children is very difficult, especially the youngest of these, we do have to do our best to adhere to this, so children will be seated at tables 2m apart. Many of the classroom resources will have been removed.

- We aim to make as much use of our wonderful outdoor space as possible so many activities will be planned to be outside, weather permitting of course.

- Aside from opening for the children of critical workers, we will also be closing the school each Wednesday so that we can deep clean our site at the mid-week point.

- If every child in those selected year groups came to school in June, we would have approximately 320 children in school with several more critical workers' children. This alone means that we are likely to need 25 separate bubbles, situated in different locations across our school. We believe that we will not be able to accommodate this number safely using the government's current guidelines. We will therefore, in line with guidelines, be prioritising our pupils in the following order: Children of critical workers, Nursery, Reception, Year 1 and finally Year 6.

- Please be aware that social mixing will still be significant despite our best endeavours.

- We aim to continue to provide home learning activities for all families but what this will look like is very much dependent on how our staff have to be deployed and the numbers of children in school.

We have been told that schools may be open from 1<sup>st</sup> June given that the scientific advice considers that to be appropriate. I'm not expecting that date to be confirmed, or indeed postponed, until just a few days before. I assure you that I won't know before you do - it will be a national announcement. This will bring about a great deal of speculation and press coverage. I suggest that this may not always be helpful for the children. Let's deal with what we currently

know and protect them from the hype of the media and the speculation they will generate. As a Trust we have decided that, if the scientific advice considers it appropriate, we will be opening our school to more children on **Thursday 4<sup>th</sup> June**.

With increased numbers of children, I will require more staff to come into school. Just as some of you are shielding yourself or shielding a member of your family, so are some of the staff. **I therefore need to know how many Nursery, Reception, Year 1 and Year 6 children will be attending school to make the necessary arrangements.** We will liaise with our group of critical workers' children separately.

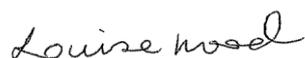
**With all the above in mind, we have created a survey for parents of children in Nursery, Reception, Year 1 and Year 6 children. This will be sent to you as a form to complete via PMX and we ask that you enter a response for each child should you have more than one child in each of these year groups. We have already spent a great deal of time last week making plans and completing risk assessments, so in order that these can be finalised I would be extremely grateful if parents complete this survey as soon as possible and certainly by midday Wednesday 20<sup>th</sup> May. Thank you in advance for your cooperation in this important matter.**

I will of course be writing to you to confirm our plans which will centre around the survey responses.

Please let your child(ren) know that we miss them and are thinking of them. We very much look forward to seeing them when it is safe for us all to come back together as our school family.

As always, if you have any questions or queries, do not hesitate to contact us via the school office ([office@barrowhedges.com](mailto:office@barrowhedges.com)).

Kind regards,



Mrs Louise Wood  
Headteacher