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

Dear parents/carers,

**Information regarding phased re-opening of school to more children (Y6, Y1, Reception & Nursery)**

I hope that you and your families are keeping well and staying safe at this difficult time. With the gradual lifting of some of the lockdown measures in England, the call for more adults to be returning to work and the announcement of the Government's plan for primary schools to re-open for some year groups as of the beginning of June, it continues to be very challenging for everyone. These factors make for another period of change and uncertainty for us all; as workers, as members of society and as parents.

At school, we would like nothing more than for our children to return. However, we must also have the safety of our school community at the forefront of our thoughts. Managing these two things is complex and difficult.

Since 23<sup>rd</sup> March, Mersey Vale has been open to a small group of children; mainly those of key workers. Since last Monday, we have been working hard to make plans to extend provision and for some year groups to return; initially Y6, Y1, Reception and Nursery as set out by the Prime Minister last week. This would be following the half term holiday and after the two INSET days on 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> June which Stockport Council announced for all schools. The complexity of the task is added to as we are receiving regular updates from the Government about what we should or should not be doing and guidance about protective measures we must be putting in place. As yet, we are still working hard to complete this more detailed planning and are working with the Heaton's cluster of schools, Stockport Local Authority and other sources of advice and support.

I would like to be as transparent as possible about the principles we are applying when working on our planning and risk assessments;

- That we are planning for the maximum safety for staff, pupils and parents at all times
- That we will be implementing all Government directives about protective measures to be put in place
- That this must be a gradual and phased re-opening to more children and staff to ensure maximum safety and implementation of protective measures at all times
- A commitment to the on-going support and learning of our pupils in Years 2, 3, 4 and 5 who will initially continue with home learning

Following our initial risk assessments and planning, I can now share the following;

1. We will not be in a position to re-open school on 10<sup>th</sup> June to ALL the year groups suggested by the Department for Education.



2. We will be following guidance in making sure that priority groups (key worker + vulnerable children) and Y6 will return first and then a phased return of the other year groups as below;  
From Wednesday 10<sup>th</sup> June – priority groups + Y6  
From Monday 15<sup>th</sup> June – Y1  
From Wednesday 17<sup>th</sup> June – Reception  
From Monday 22<sup>nd</sup> June - Nursery
3. We will be following Government advice and planning for children to be placed in smaller groups (known as bubbles) of no more than 15. In order to reduce the possibilities of cross contamination, a ‘bubble’ will have the same small team of staff in the same classroom for the rest of the school year. Bubbles would not come into contact with other staff or children. Start and end times, as well as playtimes and lunchtimes will be staggered to accommodate the distancing of the bubbles.
4. The guidance states that ‘primary children cannot be expected to be 2m apart from each other’. Whilst distancing measures are supported through the separate bubbles, we will also try to implement distancing measures within the bubbles but as we recognise it is difficult, if not impossible, especially for young children to social distance.
5. It is important to understand that for some pupils returning to school, whilst they will be in their year group, they may not be with their usual teacher, nor in their classroom or possibly with their friends, nor following their usual curriculum. We know that this will be difficult and stressful for some of our children and I would like to reassure you that the staff will work hard to support and care for the children in their bubbles and to establish warmth and support for all children very quickly.
6. For our pupils remaining at home ( years 2, 3, 4 and 5 ) we will continue to offer home learning tasks and we will manage staff working arrangements to ensure that this support continues. I am sorry for the ‘division’ that may be felt on the Government’s decision to re-open to certain year groups and not others. I hope you will appreciate that this was not a school led decision.

Going forward, we would like to find out your views and intentions re. the phased re opening of schools to more children. Today we will be sending out a survey to parents of children in priority groups, Y6, Y1, Reception and Nursery and would really appreciate you completing it as soon as possible so that we can gauge numbers we may be expecting. Ultimately, at this time, it is a parental decision about whether you choose for your children to return to school. Paragraph 7.2 of the Department for Education guidance updated on 15<sup>th</sup> May 2020 states, “Parents will not be penalised if their child does not attend school. We expect schools and other relevant partners to work with and support the relevant families and pupils to return to school. Under the Coronavirus Act 2020, we have relaxed the law, so that the parent of a child of compulsory school age is not guilty of an offence on account of the child’s failure to attend regularly at the school at which the child is registered (section 444 of the Education Act 1996).”

I trust that this information goes at least some way to answering some of the questions you may have had following last week’s announcement. We will continue to work hard to ensure our plans and our arrangements are as safe and robust as possible and that we work to ensure that those pupils returning to school will find it a welcoming and supportive environment given the various challenges of the current situation.

I will be in touch again, as soon as is possible, when we have more details of the planning.

Take care everybody,

Yours faithfully,



Mrs. J. Mullane  
Headteacher