



The Laurels
PRIMARY SCHOOL

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Headteacher: Charlotte Bull

22nd May 2020

Dear Parents and Carers,

I hope this letter finds you well. Thank you for working with us and responding quickly to our questionnaires so we can make decisions and adapt to the latest government guidance as quickly as possible. I fully appreciate how challenging these times are and the additional pressure remote learning places on you, your children and staff. By us all working together, we are doing the best we can for our children.

Today, I am writing to update you as we plan to extend provision at our school. Although the government has identified which key groups return to school, we will continue to support **all** of our children in **all** year groups whether at school or at home. However, it is important that you are aware of the process we are following and the decision making that has taken place over the last week.

As you know, the Government has asked schools to *prepare* to open to children in Reception, Year 1 and Year 6 *after* the 1st June. This was cited as the earliest date schools might be able to open; not the date by which schools would increase provision. This will only happen if the '5 Key Indicators' are met. This is likely to be announced on the 27th or 28th May. There has been mixed coverage and opinions circulated by the media which has given the impression that schools will reopen for **all** Reception, Year 1 and Year 6 children from this date. However, there is much to consider and it is important that we diligently follow the government guidance so we can reopen our school in the safest way possible for our children and staff.

The information in this letter will explain the first part of our process. School leaders are working through a very detailed risk assessment and action plan with Durrington Multi-Academy Trust who make the final decision on when our opening date may be. Together, we are assessing key areas such as building capacity, safeguarding processes, health and safety, social distancing, the learning environment and curriculum, staffing and group sizes.

The DfE has asked schools to **prioritise** the return of specific groups of children before others in our plans; they are children of critical workers or vulnerable children, Reception, Year 1, and Year 6. A survey was sent out to gauge the uptake for each of these groups and your swift response is enabling us to consider the number of children who would like to return, as well as our school site and the number of adults we have available to work. We are using this information to develop a model which minimises risks to all.

The children will be put into small groups of 8 in a classroom. These are known as 'bubble groups' and will enable us to adhere to social distancing guidelines and encourage the children to do the same. The children will remain in this bubble group with the same member of staff until the advice changes. Children and staff will not be able to mix with anyone from the other bubble groups. We will try to put children with their friends but cannot guarantee this.

We will need to help the children to understand and get used to new routines and a very different way of school life. We are conscious that although the children will be back at The Laurels, they may not have their usual Teacher or TA even though we will try where possible to accommodate this with the staff available. The school will also look different with social distancing markings and signage. We also need to consider the emotional wellbeing of our children, support their learning and help them socialise safely outside of the family setting. This needs to be a gradual process and cannot be rushed. We need to ensure that our safety procedures are robust, although we cannot eliminate the risk completely.

The children will be feeling a range of different emotions, having not been here for the last ten weeks; some will be incredibly excited and others will be nervous. Miss Pinney has sent out a questionnaire to gauge how the children are feeling so we can support them. We would appreciate you discussing the questions with your children so we can tailor our return to school curriculum to their needs.

This is a unique, ever changing situation and we are filtering new information constantly. I am proud of what we have achieved as a community by working together through these unprecedented times. We all want to be back in school, back to normal, but this has to be done in a planned and safe manner. When we are prepared, we will:

1. Share our risk assessment with staff and governors and receive their comments.
2. Share our plans with parents/carers for your views.
3. Adjust our plan based on feedback from all groups.
4. Communicate our new procedures and routines to staff and parents so everyone knows what is expected of them.
5. Plan which groups can return to school and when. It may not be possible for us to accommodate all groups. We will communicate when your child can return to school and which bubble and classroom they will be allocated to. **The very earliest this will be for the first group is 8th June.**
6. Write to you about the organisation of the school day. For example, drop off and collection times will need to be staggered to minimise social contact; children will not be in school 8.30am - 3pm. The DfE advises only one adult will be allowed drop off and collect. 2m social distance markings will be in place outside entrances.
7. Communicate with you about what will be different for the children so you can brief them before they return. For example, breaktimes and lunchtimes will be staggered because 'bubble' groups are not allowed to mix or play together. There will be no physical contact. Children will not be able to use the trim trail or any P.E. equipment.
8. Implement the first phase of return.
9. We will monitor and re-evaluate all practices and processes throughout with the support of our Governing Body and Durrington Multi-Academy Trust so we can set up each bubble as safely as possible.

Our 'Google Classroom' opportunities will continue for those children at home and complement what is taught at school. As always, you will be able to contact us for support with this and we will be pleased to help.

With the next statutory government review on 28 May I will write to you in the week beginning 1 June. We will obviously make sure that children and parents have as much notice as possible before any return to work in classrooms.

The government has issued a lot of guidance for schools and colleges but very little of it is 'directed'. They are asking schools to consider their local circumstances and plan any return based on these. Our aim therefore is to make sure that we consider all of the issues, and plan carefully, before we bring more children onto the site. The guidance for parents (from the Department for Education) can be found here:

https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/closure-of-educational-settings-information-for-parents-and-carers/reopening-schools-and-other-educational-settings-from-1-june?utm_medium=email&utm_source=govdelivery

If you have any questions or comments at this stage please do not hesitate to contact us. We wish you a safe half term and hope that you get some time to relax and we look forward to continuing to work with you next half term.

Kind regards,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Charlotte Bull".

Charlotte Bull

Headteacher