

29th July 2020

Dear (Parent / Carer)

I do hope that this letter finds you and your family fit and well.

Whilst it was a rather abrupt end to the summer term, I am absolutely confident that it was the right decision. Our focus will always be on the safety of our school community and I appreciate your support of this very difficult decision.

A significant amount of time is being spent on preparation for everyone's return in September and our actions are closely aligned to the *Guidance for full opening: special schools and other specialist settings (July 2020)*. We have in place proportionate protective measures for our children, young people and staff to return in September, and have implemented a best practice approach.

We have taken the decision to maintain bubbles to minimise the number of contacts, and minimise movement by providing each bubble with a dedicated indoor and outdoor space. Over the summer, a number of outdoor facilities are being built, including a living & learning summer house, a reading hut and two large canopies to allow for outdoor play and dining to our BEST building and over the courtyard (next to the Food Tech room). The development of a 'snack shack' will start from January, where we will be offering alternative small meals and providing the opportunity for students to develop their knowledge in relation to a healthy and balanced diet and meal planning, and a skills-based approach to cooking using our school grown produce by working and learning alongside catering staff. The intentions to expand this offer and open a Bistro (serving our school community & the local community over time) is planned for the latter months in the summer term.

I know that you will understand the significant logistics involved in establishing day and residential bubbles, transporting children and young people into school and back home back, and the planning of breaks and meal times. All of this will require staggered start and finish times and some flexibility on all our parts – for which I am very grateful.

Assemblies will continue in their new Zoom form for the foreseeable future and all children will be encouraged to watch and participate with their bubble every week. We will continue to screen live so families are able to watch too.

We will introduce a new curriculum and review its impact as we welcome all children back to school and reflect upon the consequences of COVID-19 on loss – loss in the wider sense (routine, structure, friendships & relationships, opportunity & freedom). We know that for some children such losses can contribute to a student's mental health with anxiety, trauma & bereavement playing a large role.

We have constructed a curriculum that is responsive to the needs of children, that harvests their experience and makes sense of it emotionally as well as cognitively. Our recovery curriculum will focus on supporting children to build and re-build positive relationships with others, managing feelings and behaviour, supporting enjoyment and achievement and supporting physical health and wellbeing. There will be a strong focus on re-teaching and establishing learning behaviours, working through gaps in knowledge, building confidence and reigniting self-assurance. We will be actively encouraging outdoor learning and living, and will continue to deliver a broad and balanced curriculum, providing a full package of educational and care support.

We will encourage children to physical (social) distance, however national guidance advises that this is very difficult for our children and they are unlikely to be able to maintain this within their group (bubble). We will encourage robust hand and respiratory hygiene ('catch it, bin it, kill it' approach) and the school has a number of anti-bacterial hand gel stands and stations across the site. We appreciate that we will all have been encouraging this routine in our own households and for most children and adults this will have become a commonplace practice. Enhanced cleaning is in place and on-site facilities such as the adventure playground will be timetabled for use.

Face coverings will not be worn by children or adults whilst in school unless in exceptional circumstances. Some therapists may use them but always after a conversation with an individual child. Whilst travelling in transport, face coverings are perfectly acceptable and carers are asked to consider this in terms of travel to and from school. We will obviously provide face coverings for anyone visiting shops or whilst on daytime extra-curricular visits.

PPE will only be used where a child already has routine intimate care needs that involves the use of PPE, and where a child is symptomatic and only then if a distance of 2 meters cannot be maintained.

I'm sure we can all appreciate the potential for localised lockdowns and that decisions, often made with very little notice, and out of our control, can impact upon so many services. We will all have heard/experienced further restrictions placed upon Bradford, Kirklees and Calderdale over the last few days and will understand that we will make decisions in the best interests of the school and its local community. As part of our contingency planning, we continue to review and risk assess the school's position, and this includes developing our virtual offer to provide continuity of education if such a decision is forced upon us.

I must reiterate that if your child or anyone in the household becomes ill and has any of the symptoms associated with COVID-19, please do not send your child into school and contact us immediately so we can advise and support you accordingly. Sara Hill (our School Nurse) is always available.

It will be so important that we all prepare for the changes and help our children adapt to new routines. We will continue to review and adapt practice (in line with local and national guidance) and keep our families informed.

I do hope that I have been able to reassure you that we have taken all reasonable and proportionate measures to welcome all children and young people back to school on Wednesday 2<sup>nd</sup> September.

We take great pride in our drive for happiness, emotional and physical health and well-being and I know we can look forward to our young people achieving great things.

If you have any questions or comments, please do not hesitate to contact the school.

I thank you wholeheartedly for your continued support.

Kind regards,

*Mrs S Ackroyd*

Principal