

3rd July 2020

Planning for the September Return

Dear Parents and Friends of Castle Hill,

Having received the Government's guidance yesterday, we are in a position to share some initial thoughts with you regarding our plans for the next academic year. We will be working on the exact detail over the next week or so. This is clearly a complex challenge requiring in-depth planning and a further communication will be sent out before the end of term.

Returning to school is vital for children's education and for their wellbeing. The Government continue to state that the risk to children themselves of becoming severely ill from COVID-19 is very low. The Government have also made it clear that they expect ALL pupils to return to school and so attendance will be mandatory again from the beginning of September 2020.

We are very much looking forward to welcoming back all children in September. However, the school will not be completely 'back to normal' as there are certain protective measures that need to be in place, to keep the pupils and staff safe. These include:

- our current 'Pod' structure, which minimises mixing between different groups of children, will move to a **year group** of children. These will operate as 'stand-alone units'
- teachers and adults are still being advised to keep 2m away from pupils where possible
- children will be seated facing forwards in the same direction, **wearing normal full school uniform and washing their hands throughout the day**
- robust cleaning of classrooms during the day with a deep clean at the end of every day
- staggered start times (details to follow)
- staggered play and lunch times (with their year group)
- separated year groups will use shared areas, such as the hall, at different times and after being cleaned
- procedures for dealing with a child or staff member who are displaying symptoms which are already in place and will continue to be actively engaged in the Test & Trace system
- contingency plans in the case of a local lockdown and the need to return to remote teaching.

On return in September, the initial curriculum focus will be on identifying any gaps in learning and catching these up. We will be assessing the children and will then deliver an intense catch-up programme. As you will have seen in the news the government will be providing schools with a 'catch-up support package'. This funding amount will not be qualified until September, but we have already recruited a new teacher (Miss Bellars) and partially released two existing teachers (Mr Balcombe and Mr Vyas) to help deliver this additional support. We are also looking into 1-2-1 tutoring for our most vulnerable children. English and maths will be the immediate focus although, as always, we will aim to



deliver this through a broad and balanced curriculum. High Performance Learning will continue to be a strong focus throughout both schools.

We are currently looking into the feasibility of offering wrap-around care and after school clubs. This is significantly complicated by the need to keep 'the groups' of children from mixing with one another. External providers have been given guidance on how to run such provision safely. Once we know their intentions and whether the new guidance make this a financially viable option, we will provide you with an update. We feel that we have to advise you and make it very clear that there is a high chance that the wrap-around care and after school clubs will not be available initially on return to school in September.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank you for all your support and understanding during this challenging time. 169 (39%) of our pupils are now back in school and we have been open since March, 5 days a week including the holidays. The number of 'Pods' have increased from 4 to 19 during this time in order to accommodate as many pupils as possible until the end of the term. A lot of unseen hard work and planning has gone on behind the scenes and we would like to thank all of our staff for making this happen.

Finally, we recognise this has been an intense and demanding period for all concerned. Your partnership and understanding have clearly showed a very real community rising to an unprecedented challenge. The unseen stresses and strains that you have had to cope with have not gone unnoticed and we will continue whatever we can to support the school community. Hopefully, September will bring a new chapter for all of us and, as always, we remain open to your suggestions for any improvements we can make.

Have a good weekend.

Mr JDF Martin and the Castle Hill Team