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Monday 6th July 2020

COVID-19 and Hawthorns School update

Dear Parent/Carer,

I write to update you on the next steps at Hawthorns regarding the re-opening of our school.

We have now picked through the very detailed guidance issued by the Government for special school settings. We can confirm that there is an expectation from the Department for Education that **all children will return to school** at the beginning of the new school year **in September**.

There are a considerable number of provisions and protocols that we have to put in place in the building before that can happen, in order to make school as safe as possible in the circumstances. Many of these are already in place. We have been open throughout the pandemic since the end of March, originally for a very small number of keyworker and vulnerable children, and then for an increased number of pupils since mid-June. The Government guidelines do not take a social distancing approach – which would be impossible in our school – but rather a ‘bubble’ or isolation model is directed. This will mean that children will be admitted to school into their class ‘bubble’ with as little contact with the rest of the school beyond their class/classroom as possible. There will be no joint or large gatherings like assemblies, some meal times will be taken in classrooms, and playtimes will be staggered to limit children’s contact with others. There are circulation routes in the building and restrictions on the movement of children and staff around the school. Hygiene protocols have been stepped up, and there is an enhanced cleaning regime throughout the school as you would expect.

We will endeavour to re-introduce as much normality as we can to the school day. It will take some time for our children to re-acclimatise to school routines again but this will be our first priority. We do not underestimate the size of this task but we hope you will work with us to settle the children back into school as quickly as we can. There is lots to catch up on when the children are ready, and it is important that we can implement their specific provisions and daily structure as soon as is practically possible. Our outdoor learning programmes in the garden and wildlife areas will continue.

There will be a policy of no visitors in the building to begin with to keep the risk of infection exposure low. Staff from the various support agencies who work with children to assess them or support with their EHCP provisions will still be allowed to work in school, but under stricter control measures. There are protocols in place for families who drop off and/or collect their child from Hawthorns; those of you new to these will be informed of them soon.

The end of a school year is also a poignant one. Our Year 6 children will be moving on at a challenging time, and when they have been unable to have the proper send-off we traditionally like to give to our departing pupils. We also have some staff leaving too. Amy Rose, our teacher in Elm class is moving on to a position abroad. We are grateful for all her efforts in re-creating our Elm class with a new approach over the last two years. Jon Pointon, our teacher in Beech class, has also decided to move on to other challenges. He has been a highly dedicated and popular teacher during his time at Hawthorns. Joyce Davies, our long-serving teaching assistant in Acorns class has decided

to retire. She is known to many, many families and staff for her kindness and good nature. We wish all our departing staff our heartfelt best wishes and the best of luck in their futures.

We have six new teachers joining us for the new school year – Alan Brown, Ian Sylvester, Sarah Dunsdon, Kelly Foden, Liz Platt and Anthony Nathaniel. We are currently holding interviews for new teaching assistants. We intend to inform parents of new classes once the staffing has been finalised on Thursday this week. Building work on our additional classrooms has now started on the middle playground, and these have a completion date set to allow us to open them on time in September. We have 35 children joining Hawthorns next year, and while transition processes have been challenging during recent months, we welcome them and their families as members of the Hawthorns community. The school will have four additional classes next year.

I will update you all with further information later this week. Now we are working towards re-opening the school, I will be providing more updates more often. If you require information or want me to clarify anything, please pass your query or suggestion through your established class team communications, this is the most effective way of ensuring messages get through.

Finally, please still be mindful that however reduced, the virus threat is still out there and there are still controls in place when you are out and about. The last three months have been challenging and difficult for us all and we don't want a repeat of the lockdown experience any time soon. Hopefully you have managed to start coming out of this period with minimal impact to your family and friends. We look forward to seeing everyone soon.

Take care and keep in touch,

Pierre Coiffait

Pierre Coiffait, Head of School