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*Headteacher: Mr S Parker* ***‘Growing Together. Empowered to be more’***

Tuesday 19th May 2020

Dear Parents and Carers,

Since we were last in touch with you, there has been a lot going on and a lot of thought about how we move forward. We so desperately want to see all of your children back in school with us, all of the time, however our number one priority remains that we provide the highest possible level of safety. We greatly appreciate the trust that you show in us in providing a safe and caring environment for your children and we are not about to jeopardise that.

Senior leaders have planned and risk-assessed extensively ever since the government’s announcement that schools should be ‘reopening’ from June, and the governing body have met to unpick every possible plan and procedure for our children returning. We have liaised with a number of local schools to consider a variety of possible measures to maintain the very highest levels of safety possible, whilst focusing on Urmston Primary’s own setting and our own circumstances.

We realise that there are numerous considerations that we have to balance. Firstly, and primarily, is the safety of your children, yourselves and our staff. Secondly, is yours and our desire for children to return to school, for all the obvious reasons. And thirdly, of course, we have to take into account your working and domestic arrangements and how you are supported with this.

After much deliberation, senior leaders and the governing body, in consulting with staff, have unanimously agreed that it is not feasible for the children to return on a full time basis. Because we will need children to be grouped in smaller numbers to reduce the risks of transmission, our staff capacity, classroom and outdoor space is inadequate to cater for this safely.

Furthermore, the responses to our survey last week indicated that only around a third of parents would be sending their child in to school, with a third saying they were unsure and a further third saying they would not be sending their children in, either through lack of confidence in it being safe enough for their children or themselves, or due to medical vulnerability. We want your children to be in school and so we know we need to ensure that you are as confident that we are doing everything possible to keep them as physically, mentally and emotionally safe as possible. We do not feel that having children in full time would enable us to do this.

We have also agreed that it is essential that any plan we have is sustainable, that we have capacity to adapt if the numbers of children coming in increases, and that by frequently reviewing and monitoring the situation, we can increase those numbers if we feel it is safe. The government have proposed that years 2, 3, 4 and 5 *might* return safely to school at some point this academic year and this is something we would very much like to make happen. Our plan gives us the possibility of achieving this in a phased manner, as and when it is safe to do so. We also feel that it is essential that in the meantime children in Years 2, 3, 4 and 5 are not left out of this; there has to be capacity for home learning to continue for these children and so this has also been a consideration.

As said, the main consideration regarding our capacity is the need to have children in small ‘bubbles’ of less than 15 children, which has a significant impact on space and staffing. On that basis, our plan is that **every child in the designated year groups will be in two days a week:**

* **Nursery** will be split in to two groups; one which will attend on a Monday and Tuesday and one that will attend on Thursday and Friday. Wednesday will be used for a deep clean of the nursery.
* **Reception** children will be in on Monday and Tuesday and will be split over six of the infant classrooms.
* **Year 1** children will be in on a Thursday and Friday and will be split over the same six classrooms.
* For both of these year groups, no children will be in on Wednesday so that these classrooms can be deep cleaned.
* **Year 6** will be split over six classrooms in the upper school building with Mr Keen’s and Mrs Billingsley’s classes both being split into three groups. Mr Keen’s class will be in on Monday and Tuesday and Mrs Billingsley’s class will be in on Thursday and Friday. No children will be in on Wednesday as the upper school building will be deep cleaned.
* **The children of key workers and those children deemed ‘vulnerable’** for Years 2, 3, 4 and 5 will be in four groups in the Hornby (Year 3 and 4) building.

*(In order to ensure children stay part of their bubble, we need to stipulate that key worker parents and those parents of children deemed ‘vulnerable’ in Years N, R, 1 and 6 will need to make a decision on whether they’ll need full time provision. If they do need full time provision, their child will be in a separate key worker bubble. If they choose just the two days, they’ll be with a bubble in their year group.* ***If this applies to you, please come and talk to us about possible arrangements****).*

**We will also put in place comprehensive safety measures, including:**

* Two-metre markings on the ground outside school to aid social distancing for adults.
* No lines when dropping off children in the mornings - parents drop off and leave as was the case pre-lockdown.
* A one-way system in school buildings.
* Children to be grouped in ‘Bubbles’ of 10-12, who will remain with the same staff member every day (so any risk of infection spreading is minimised).
* Zones in the playground so children can stick to their ‘bubbles’ during play times, lunch times and at the end of the day.
* Staggered play times and lunch times to enable greater social distancing between bubbles.
* Staggered start and finish times to enable greater social distancing for adults and less traffic (we’ll be asking you to walk where possible).
* Children will have their own packs of resources so that they do not have to share equipment etc., again minimising risk of infection.
* Certain equipment will be removed from Nursery, Reception and Year 1 classes, based on government guidance, as it will be too difficult to clean and increase the risk of infection spreading.
* Doors will be safely kept open where possible so that handles are not touched.
* Increased hand-washing facilities and timings – soap dispensers will be in every room and at the front offices for any essential visitors. Children will be washing hands upon entering the school building, before and after lunch, at the end of the school day, and perhaps between each lesson if necessary. All staff will have their own hand sanitiser.
* We will expect all children to have a packed lunch supplied by the local authority (unless there are very specific dietary requirements). These will be delivered to the classes so that children do not need to go into the hall in larger groups. These will be free to Reception and Year 1 and we will let you know the cost for Year 6.
* Children will not be permitted to bring in anything from home.
* There will not be an expectation to wear school uniform. Instead, we ask that children wear clean clothes every day to minimise the risk of any possible infection being brought in to school.
* **The above is not an exhaustive list and will be added to as further guidance comes to light.**

We fully realise that this is not an ideal situation, but this is the reality. We will need you to talk to your children, as we will upon their return, to help them understand that school is going to be different for a while: due to the ‘bubbles’, they won’t be with all their friends (although we’ll do our best to ensure they are with some of them and we’ll take great time in planning this) and it is possible they won’t be with their class teacher (but it will be with a friendly and familiar face!).

Our learning focus will differ dependent on the age of your child. For Nursery, we will be focusing on play, social and emotional learning behaviours as well as early phonics, reading and number skills. Reception and Year 1 will be focusing on their social and emotional learning behaviours, early reading and phonics and core number skills. We will also be utilising outdoor space as much as possible for all year groups. There will be some focus in Year 6 on core reading, writing, spelling and maths skills and reminding them of the importance of positive learning behaviours in preparation for secondary school. Regardless, our main focus will be on transition and doing our best to ensure that the children move on having had the chance to do something together – we’ll be working on this with all the socially distant creativity we can muster! Home learning will supplement what happens in school.

But in all of this, our number one focus will be on the emotional wellbeing of our children. We’ll be talking with them about what has happened, is still happening, and how they feel about it, and we will be prioritising their mental and physical health in every circumstance (emphasising all of our school values, of course!). Our pastoral care will remain our biggest strength, despite it having to be adapted – there’ll be no hugs at the moment (other than some creative non-contact ones that we’ll be asking your children to come up with!). We will be available to communicate with you at all times and will always welcome your emails and your calls.

So, based upon the information in this letter, we are asking you once again whether you will be sending your child in to school. We feel that the measures we are taking will give you greater confidence in sending your children back to Urmston Primary from the 8th June, and your answers will help us make our plans more concrete and get our staff, indoor and outdoor spaces and ‘bubbles’ organised. ***We will reiterate though, all of this is based upon the government’s ‘five safety tests’ being met and it is not yet definite that schools will reopen.***

There are separate surveys for Nursery, Reception, Year 1, Year 6 and another for Years 2, 3, 4 and 5; you’ll find the links for these below. This time, there is one simple yes/no answer: ‘Will you be sending your child in to school based upon our plan?’; but there will also be space for your comments.

Survey Links:

Nursery: <https://s.surveyplanet.com/FCmKpPuq7>

Reception: <https://s.surveyplanet.com/3k2axorqO>

Year 1: <https://s.surveyplanet.com/VIdRFcVaK>

Year 6: <https://s.surveyplanet.com/ebfLgKKvI>

Years 2-5: <https://s.surveyplanet.com/3qjyVjlYB>

As always, thank you for your support, your understanding and your resilience. We are immensely proud of our community and the relationship we have with you all and are very much looking forward to a time when we can shake you all by the hand (or perhaps offer a big hug!) and reignite a buzz for learning and togetherness. These are the first small steps towards this goal and we remain 100% positive about the journey we face together.

Take care and stay safe.

***Simon Parker, Mark Doherty and Derek Brown***

Proud Headteacher, Deputy Headteacher and Chair of the governing body of Urmston Primary