



Cragside Church of England Primary School

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**School Motto:
"Let Your Light
Shine"**

**Headteacher: Mr Paul W Rusby
Deputy Headteacher: Mrs Joanne Parker
Assistant Headteacher: Mrs Caroline Bilton**



Thursday 14th May 2020

Parent Update Sixteen

Dear Cragside Family,

I hope that you and your family are well. Thank you so much for all your ongoing support and help.

The government have announced, as part of their first phase of wider opening, that they are asking primary schools to welcome back children in Reception, Year 1 and Year 6 alongside priority groups such as vulnerable children. They have also described what they refer to as their 'ambition' for the next phase, which is to see if other year groups can come back before the end of summer term. **Both these phases are dependent on ongoing advice from scientists and health teams.**

As a school we are eager to see our children return to school when it is safe for them to do so. The safety of the children and adults in the school must be central to any phased return to our school. We want to work closely with you as we look towards the possible start of a phased return.

Following the government's advice that Reception Year 1 and Year 6 children will be 'encouraged to attend.' We understand that some of you may have concerns about this and may not feel that you can send your child into school. **We will completely respect whatever choice you make, no measures such as fining families will be used if parents decide their child should continue to learn at home.** We are sending out an online form today to families in Reception, Year 1 and Year 6 to find out what your thoughts are on this.

The notion of all the children coming back before the end of the summer term was described by the government as being 'ambitious'. I feel that the right plan is to think, in a measured manner, about a possible 'phase one' reintroduction for early June and not to jump ahead of that at this point. Phase one might be a phased return, starting with one of the year groups. We are planning what is safe and possible and will share a plan once this is finalised.

One of the challenges, which is rightly highlighted, is the issue of social distancing. As you will know from your own children at home, this can be very difficult. As a school, we would seek to establish practical steps to support the concept of social distancing but would not be able to guarantee that, at all times, children were 2m away from one another. The nature of children, especially young children, is that social distancing is not going to be possible all of the time. I want to be honest with you about that. We are, of course, establishing how we can minimise contact.

To support this, and social distancing, it is important to be honest that school will need to look and feel different to the way it did before the school closure. Classrooms will have furniture moved around and children may be working in different classrooms than they are used to in order to follow government guidelines. The final details are still being planned and we will communicate these with you.

As you would expect, we have been planning for a possible return when it is safe to do so. Some of the practical steps we have taken include:

School Building and Physical environment

- As a school we are blessed with lots of space inside the building and outside. Over the last six weeks we have taken steps to enlarge the 'footprint' of the KS1 yard and EYFS outdoor area by slightly changing the layout and fence line of these areas.
- We have decluttered all the corridor and library areas to help the movement of children around school and will change the layout of furniture in classrooms which will be used by children.
- We are looking at possible scenarios about how to strategically isolate year groups who may come into school. The overriding aim is to support the safety of the children who attend and the adults who are teaching and supporting them.

Start and End of the School Day

- Should this first phased reopening be possible, we might need to look at a phased return of the children in Reception, Year 1 and Year 6 possibly starting with one of the year groups at the start of June. Nothing is finalised yet. Again, the overriding aim is to seek to provide a safe learning environment.
- Depending on the numbers of parents who choose to send their children into school, the classes that we feel we can accommodate in the first instance would be divided into groups so some children might not be taught in their normal classroom.
- We are considering how we can reduce the flow of parents and children coming through the school gates at any one time at the start and the end of the school day and whether a slight adjustment to timings would help this.
- Our aim is that each class would spend, weather permitting, some of each day outside of the class either on the yard, field, outdoor learning areas or in our forest school.

Hygiene

- Classrooms have been deep cleaned and decluttered. Cleaning would continue each day.
- Children would either be given, or bring from home, their own pens and pencils to avoid sharing these items.
- We would factor into each day extra time for children to wash hands.
- We have purchased hand sanitisers, boxes of tissues, disposable gloves and face covers. Whilst the wearing of any face protection would be optional, this might be used e.g. where first aid needs to be administered or support is needed with toileting with some of our youngest children.

Home and School Learning

- There will be year groups who continue to do their learning at home. If we are able to open for children in Reception, Year 1 and Year 6, there will be some families in these year groups who might not be able to send their children into school or feel that they do not want to do this. As I mentioned earlier, we will respect this choice completely. We would aim to continue to send an overview of learning home each week and highlight digital resources that are available.
- Our aim is, as we have done for the last six weeks, for children of crucial workers and vulnerable children to be invited to come into school.

As we are all aware, with the fluid nature of information from scientists and the changes to the level of the R measure which needs to be below 1.0, the possible reintroduction of groups of children in phase one or beyond may or may not happen. The purpose of this letter is to try, as we have done throughout this pandemic, to share possible directions of travel and thought processes. We know how precious your children are to you (as they are to us) and want to work with you as we look for a way through these unprecedented times. I am sorry that I cannot, at this point, give definite information but have tried to set out some honest thoughts.

Later today, Reception, Year 1 and Year 6 families will be sent a short form via email. We would be very grateful if you would be able to complete this as soon as it is possible as this supports our planning. We fully understand that anything that you write might change as the situation for our country changes, but would find it really helpful to know your thoughts as we look at the possibility of reopening to some year groups.

If we are looking at a possible longer term model of home learning for some year groups, we will also be sending out shortly a form to see if there are ways in which we can further support you and your children with home learning. This dialogue will really be helpful.

In this ever changing situation, I will write again during next week as we continue to reflect on what is possible (or not) for the start of June as the national position becomes clearer to us all. **I am sorry that we are unable to give definitive answers and do hope you will understand that although we desperately want all our children back in school, the safety of our children and staff must be the priority in any decisions that are taken.** Thank you for your understanding and ongoing support-it is very much appreciated.

I do hope that you are well and continuing to keep safe.

Thank you for all your help,

Paul Rusby