



WEST SUSSEX COUNTY COUNCIL
BARTONS PRIMARY SCHOOL

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Dear Parents/Carers,

I am writing to you again because since Monday's newsletter, the Government have made further announcements about schools and their ambition that as well as Years R, 1 and 6, all primary pupils will have the opportunity to return to school before the summer break.

On Monday evening, additional guidance came out from the DfE for schools on how to prepare for this reopening but, I am afraid; there are still many unanswered questions. Please be assured that I, the Governors, the Leadership team and all staff at Bartons are working tirelessly to work our way through this and to ensure that we continue to keep all staff and children safe, as far as it is within our power to do so. There is a huge amount to navigate before 1st June and, whilst I appreciate you are keen to know exactly what is happening, I am writing to you today to ask for your patience. This is going to take time, but we are working hard and are exploring our risk assessments, timetabling, staffing and the changes needed to the layout of the classrooms and school. But I am afraid there will be no concrete plans from us just yet and, whilst I hope to be able to give you more clarity soon, this does of course depend heavily on how things progress nationally over the coming days.

That said there are a few things I can share with you now. Firstly, please find here the guidance released by the Government for parents and carers <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/closure-of-educational-settings-information-for-parents-and-carers/reopening-schools-and-other-educational-settings-from-1-june> but please be mindful that all schools will have to approach things differently depending on their context. There have already been a few, understandable questions, which I can answer for you now:

Will Years R, 1 and 6, definitely be returning to school from 1st June?

No. Firstly, as the Government guidance outlines, this will only be permitted nationally if certain measures are met in regard to the progression of the virus. However, it is also important to say now that, even if a date is confirmed by the Government, it will still depend on each individual school's ability to implement the guidance, staff the school, and ensure that everyone is safe. Until we are confident that we can do this through our comprehensive planning and risk assessment, we are unable to say if we will definitely open this term to any



pupils. We are working hard to put all the measures in place but some aspects, such as staffing (we have some staff who will still need to be in self isolation after 1st June), are simply beyond our control.

If schools do reopen for these year groups, do I have to send my child in?

No. The Government guidance clearly states that you are 'strongly encouraged' to send your children in, but also outlines that if your child is shielding or living with someone who is extremely clinically vulnerable, they should not attend. I also understand that for many of you this will simply feel too early. No fines will be issued for non attendance before the summer holidays. Thank you to those of you that answered my survey this week. 82% of parents in Years R, 1 and 6 replied and this has helped us gain some idea about how you are feeling. We may send out another survey to the relevant year groups soon to find out more specifically which children want to return to school if it is safe to do so but it is hoped that we will be able to provide you with further information before then.

Will it be 'normal' school for these year groups if they are allowed back?

No. I am afraid not. Class sizes will be reduced and children will not be able to mix with children in other classes - creating separate groups within the school. This does of course mean that potentially your child may not be with their normal teacher and not all of their friends either. Break times and lunch break will be staggered and drop off and pick up times will be altered and staggered between year groups. School lessons may not be every day due to having to accommodate smaller groups spread over the school and the curriculum will also have to be adapted. There will be no assemblies, children will have to stay in the same place and not move around the building freely and we can't allow children to share resources either. The exact details are of course what we are currently working out. It is also important to point out that whatever we put in place may need to be altered if we then open up to all primary year groups; if it is still advised to have smaller class sizes than we will not be able to accommodate all primary children every day due to space and staffing limitations.

Will the childcare provision continue for children of key workers in other year groups?

Yes but is dependent on staffing and demand. If we are open to other year groups, we may need to alter the provision currently based in Willow Club and may have to turn down requests due to numbers. We would still only be able to support children of key workers and vulnerable children but it remains clear that if they can stay at home because a parent is working from home then they should do so. I appreciate how difficult this is - the Government have told you to go back to work if possible, with very little notice and with very little increase of childcare provision. But, in order to be able to maintain the provision for key workers we need to monitor this closely. All enquiries for key workers places must be made in



advance through email to Mrs A. Powell (deputy@bartonsprimary.school). Please remember that children cannot just turn up without confirmation from us.

School will be closed for all pupils on Bank holiday Monday 25th May and then open again on Tuesday 26th for key workers and vulnerable children only.

If the School partially reopens, will remote learning be continuing for all the other year groups? And what about the children in Years R, 1 and 6 that I have decided to keep at home?

For all other year groups yes. Maintaining our Seesaw provision throughout the rest of this term is vital and something that we are considering alongside all of our other plans. Our intention is that there will be no changes to Years 2-5 in terms of the work set, although for the primary year groups we would no longer be able to guarantee that your child's normal class teacher would be the one setting the work as they may need to be in school staffing smaller class sizes. In Years R, 1 and 6 we are hoping to be able to set some remote learning for those children who are remaining at home, but I hope you understand that this wouldn't be able to be at the same level as before due to staff providing provision in school as well.

Will my child be safe returning to school this term?

This is of course the most important question and one I currently simply cannot answer. Obviously it is our absolute wish to be able to answer this positively, and we will only open the school to any year group once we are able to do so. I am a Headteacher, not a health professional, but we are working closely with the local authority, other local schools and will work closely with you as parents as we move forward. One thing I can say is that, whatever we put in place, it will not be possible to properly social distance children whilst in school. We will put in all of the measures and set strict rules but this will be fairly impossible with young children to guarantee. It is important that you realise this.

The staff and Governors at Bartons always put the needs of the children and families first because we really care. Most of us are parents too and so we know what it feels like to have worries and questions and probably share some of your views on this situation too. I can reassure you that we are all working really hard to assess this situation and will have genuine reasons why we can or cannot do things, some of which we may not be able to share with you. Your support has been really positive and much appreciated over the last 8 weeks so please continue to support us whilst we navigate this next chapter.

Yours sincerely,

Kate Powell

Headteacher



