



# Peafield Lane Academy

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Dear Parents and carers,

As parents of children in years 2, 3, 4 and 5 you may have been bitterly disappointed by the government announcement last week that, because infection controls have not reached an acceptable level, they were no longer going to instruct schools to open “for all pupils” for the last few weeks of term.

This was always an ambition of theirs rather than a promise and we are as frustrated as you by the time it is taking for the virus controls to make the situation safe enough for schools to move forward effectively and to meet that goal.

As a parent of a year 3 child, who struggles with his learning at the best of times, I am also concerned about the length of time our children have been missing formal instruction and away from their friends and peers. Whilst the online curriculum we designed and have been providing is recognised throughout the county as a model of best practice, it is no substitute for being in a proper classroom with a proper teacher who can assess and adapt lessons to meet everyone’s needs.

A couple of days ago, the government said that if schools have capacity, they could open to a wider range of year groups. I am going to be really clear – Peafield does not have that capacity.

We currently have 19 teachers and TAs allocated to small group Pods based throughout the school who cannot mix with other children or staff. This means that, at present, the home learning programme is being run by just a skeleton handful of staff: Mr Dallison, for example is currently managing the online learning for all of year 3 and 4 children whilst Miss Rowbotham covers sick leave in one of the school Pods.

Even if we could magically create new classrooms, we don’t have the staff to lead new Pods of children unless we were to do what some schools have opted for and cut back on the home learning provision and I’m not prepared to do that.

I have desperately wanted to write to you with some good news and solid information on what will happen next. Whilst I can’t do that yet, I’m going to share my thinking behind what I would *like* to happen and what we’re currently working on ahead of further instruction from the government. Be aware that everything mentioned below is an ambition – not something I can promise.

- Between now and the end of term home learning support **will** continue with the full offer and curriculum we have been following since March.
- Over summer I am hoping to bring together a number of social and sporting clubs that can run for pupils of all ages and give them access to the school facilities – I have no idea yet how this would be funded, or even which groups could run but we’re in the process of

sending out feelers and seeing who might be able to run the clubs should it be allowed. If you know of anyone who has experience in running such clubs, ask them to get in touch – the more the merrier. This would, of course, be subject to DBS and safeguarding checks, some easing of the social distancing rules etc.

- The government is talking about catch-up schemes but haven't yet provided any information about who these will be for, how they will run or how they will be staffed and funded. My guess is that it will be something akin to private tuition where pupils have a 1:1 face to face meeting with a retired teacher or something, and that it will be funded directly by the DfE. That is just a guess though. We will support it where we can but I want my staff to have a break (they have worked without any break including through Easter, half term and bank holidays without pay) – I have no intention of asking them to run extra lessons.

Our Trust has forbidden the use of online live lessons for safeguarding reasons. I'm hoping that this restriction can be lifted at some point. We are currently trialling a system using MSTeams with a small number of pupils in school. If this is successful and if we can get the technology in place as well as a lifting of the restrictions (all fairly big challenges), we hope to make use of this with a wider audience.

I will be very surprised if there is not some sort of revision of the current summer term schooling system for September. I cannot imagine schools will still only be open to limited year groups as they are now. As soon as we know more, we will create a plan and share it with you.

Most of all, I am hoping that the disease is under enough control that it is safe enough for us to be allowed to have everyone back and for classes to run as close to normal as possible and that we will be able to meet everyone's needs once more.

I assure you that we are doing everything we can to continue to support you through this dreadful crisis. As soon as I have more to offer I will share it with you. Updates and changes to rules and guidance are happening all the time and if any of them provide me with the capacity to do more for you and your children, I will let you know.

I look forward to seeing you soon.

Gary Walker  
Headteacher