

'Achieving Excellence through Leadership'

# GILES JUNIOR SCHOOL

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Headteacher: Miss. L. Whitby

Wednesday, 17 June 2020

Dear Parents/Carers,

**Statement from the Education Secretary, Gavin Williamson on 9<sup>th</sup> June 2020: "... we are not able to welcome all primary children back for a full month before the summer."**

Schools and families have been faced with some extreme challenges since the partial closure of schools to most children from 23<sup>rd</sup> March. We saw families locked down together while trying to conduct home learning and the school has worked hard to develop ways to teach from afar (and we continue to try to improve this). Somehow, we reached a new normal and have issued work packs for collection, posted other packs out when necessary, made deliveries of food and work to families who needed it and continue to be bombarded with new government, local authority and press announcements.

In school, we have taught the children of key workers and those who were most vulnerable. Teachers had to adjust to different year groups and have been teaching all ages from 7 – 11. Children have adapted to having new pupils in their class and different routines to normal. Again, we found a way to make it work and families supported us so well, being patient while we tried to figure it all out with sometimes little or last-minute guidance from the government.

Throughout this, we have ensured that every decision and plan had the best interests of the pupils at the fore-front of our mind. Staff have ensured that the pupils in their care, whether they are in school or learning from home, are as well looked after as possible.

Schools were issued with government guidance to help them make schools safe as we welcomed back year 6. They were given four bullet points, ordered as to the most important first:

- *avoiding contact with anyone with symptoms*
- *frequent hand cleaning and good respiratory hygiene practices*
- *regular cleaning of settings*
- *minimising contact and mixing*

With that in mind, we currently have year 6 split into four groups across school, each with a teacher and teaching assistant. We have an additional four groups which are made up of vulnerable children and those whose parents are key workers and have no other childcare available. The day is staggered from 8:50-10:30 for entry and ends between 2:00 and 3:30 so that we can reduce mixing. Each group has an allocated set of toilets to use so they don't have to mix at all throughout the day.



These 8 bubble groups are taught by 8 out of our 11 teachers with support staff allocated to each bubble. The remaining teachers provide cover to these bubble groups to allow their colleagues to have their designated time out of class to complete planning, preparation and assessment time (this is a statutory requirement). Staff do not mix in any other groups than their own in order to keep each bubble safe.

We are, therefore, currently at full capacity and can have no further groups in school. We are not able to timetable any additional staggered times nor do we have any additional staff or other resources while the current restrictive measures are in place. I know this will frustrate and sadden parents who had hoped that the government had a plan to be able to bring all children back to school for a month before the end of the academic year.

Throughout this time, I have not expressed any opinions on the government's plans. I have followed the remit at each time to make arrangements as directed. However, I will voice that the way the announcements have been made, with little or no thought as to the logistics behind them, has been very difficult to manage. The media also exacerbate the situation by releasing misinformed soundbites which both confuse and frustrate parents (and headteachers to be honest).

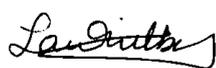
**Sadly, the fact remains that we do not have the capacity to open the school to any more groups of pupils than to the priority year group (year 6), those who are vulnerable and to the families of key workers.**

A letter will be released at the end of next week detailing the class and teacher your child will have next year. This will be followed by a leaflet and details of a video or other communication to let them see their new classroom and, where possible, to hear from their teacher.

I have had many questions from parents asking about September. I am sorry to say I do not yet know what the plans will be. Should the measures currently in place still need to be applied, we will need to think very carefully about how the children can get back into school. This may well be a phased transition for each year group, or continue to be a "blended" teaching approach of home and school study. I await more information and guidance before planning this.

I have a duty to communicate to the governing body and staff before putting together a clear plan at each step. I do not want to be in the situation where I make promises I cannot keep, or have to change plans at the last minute because a decision was rushed. I will continue to inform parents about any changes to our plans as soon as I can, and thank you for your understanding and patience during this difficult time.

Yours sincerely,



Miss L Whitby  
Headteacher