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Headteacher: Mr Iain Horner

Wednesday 20th May

Dear Parents and Carers,

I hope you and your children are well and staying safe.

As you will know, on Sunday 11th May, the Prime Minister announced that primary schools in England are being asked to welcome back Nursery, Reception, Year 1 and Year 6 pupils from the week commencing 1st June. **This is a conditional date and the final decision whether it is safe to reopen schools will be made nearer the time based on the latest scientific advice. We are led to believe that this decision will be forthcoming on Thursday May 28th. As soon as possible afterwards, we will confirm with parents of children due to attend school whether the following plan will go ahead or whether the Government have decided to postpone 're-opening'.**

The safety of our children, staff and families is our utmost priority and, over the past week, we have been digesting further guidance around measures that schools are being advised to take to reduce risk when schools 're-open'. The changes that we will need to implement at Chesterton to prepare for this phased re-opening should not be underestimated. After half-term, the school that 're-opens' will be very different to the one that closed on the 20th March. The main challenge is that it is impossible to ensure complete social distancing in any primary school, especially amongst the younger pupils. This has been recognised in the Government guidance that we received: *"We know that, unlike older children and adults, early years and primary age children cannot be expected to remain 2 metres apart from each other and staff. In deciding to bring more children back to early years and schools, we are taking this into account."*

Risk Reduction Measures

We have been working hard to formulate a plan that includes all reasonable adaptations to school life to reduce risk to our school community. These measures are likely to include, but will not be exclusive to, the following:

- Class sizes will be limited to a maximum of 15 (as per Government guidelines).
- Children will attend school on a part-time basis (two days per week) until further notice.
- There will be staggered entry and exit times for different year groups.
- Parents/carers will not be allowed to enter the playground or the school building.
- Seating in classrooms will be organised to maximise social distancing.
- There will be staggered break and lunch times.
- Children will eat lunch in the classroom or in a designated outside area.
- There will be no mixing between cohorts. Contact with staff working with other cohorts will be minimised.
- Regular hand washing and reinforcement of good hygiene with the children.
- Regular cleaning of frequently touched surfaces or items.
- Children to have their own 'stationery packs' to avoid sharing whenever possible.
- Other resources will be limited to those that can be easily cleaned before use by another child.
- Outdoor learning opportunities will be maximised.

As you will appreciate, this presents a variety of challenges and will only be feasible if **children are in school on a part-time basis**. We only have a limited number of classrooms and staff, so there is no other option to achieve this in a way that is safe and manageable for all concerned. I have been in discussion with a number of other local headteachers and this approach is common across the majority of local schools.

Organisation

This is how we will organise the provision, commencing the week beginning Monday 1st June.

- School will be closed to all pupils as planned for an INSET day on Monday 1st June. Staff will use this time to continue to prepare classrooms for the 're-opening' of school and to ensure risk assessments are comprehensively updated.
- From Tuesday 2nd June, we will continue to be open for children of key workers, regardless of year group, for five days a week.
- Year groups will be divided in half to allow cohort sizes to be kept below 15 at all times. The two groups will not attend on the same days. The key worker group will be split if numbers exceed 15 pupils.
- Year 6 pupils will return for two days the first week of next half term, to allow school to establish effective systems and procedures with the oldest children in school.
- From Monday 8th June, Reception and Year 1 pupils will begin returning to school (on a part-time basis – see below).
- We will only be open for children in Reception, Year 1 and 6 for two consecutive days for face-to-face teaching a week (either Monday/Tuesday or Thursday/Friday). They will continue learning at home for the remaining three days.
- School will only be open to our 'key worker' group on Wednesday to allow for comprehensive cleaning of rooms before use by the next group of pupils. This will also allow staff time to continue preparation of Home Learning resources for children not in school (see below).

We will provide further information and details regarding groups, timings etc. to parents of children in these year groups in the coming days. I am sure that you will have many questions about the specifics of the provision and we will endeavour to answer these in the next communication.

For now, we are asking all parents/carers with children in these year groups to contact the school office to confirm whether or not you wish your child to return to school at this point. Please respond by midday on Friday May 22nd. If we do not hear, we will assume that your child will not be attending. If you choose for your child not to return to school, you will retain the option to take up that place later in the Summer Term. However, we will ask for notification during the week prior to allow planning for their return.

Home Learning

For those cohorts able to return to school (Reception, Year 1 and Year 6), there will no longer be a Home Learning 'timetable', but suggested activities and guidance will still be available on the school website for days when they are continuing their learning at home. For those cohorts (Year 2, 3, 4 and 5) who are not able to return to school at this point, Home Learning will continue, but please be aware that staff availability and contact will be lower due to the demands of work in school.

Expectation to attend school

The government is encouraging children in those year groups to return to school, and we are looking forward to welcoming those back who choose to return. I appreciate that some of you may be reluctant to send your children back to school and will have concerns about their safety. This is a decision that only you can make. The Government acknowledge this and have said that parents who choose not to send their children in during the summer term will not be fined for non-attendance. As mentioned above, you will retain the right to change your decision during the term, but would ask for prior notice and contact before any change.

Children in other year groups

The Government also announced, 'Our ambition is to bring all primary year groups back to school before the summer holiday, for a month if feasible, though this will be kept under review'.

This will be an even greater challenge and, under the current guidelines, will only be feasible if all children are in school on a part-time basis. However, there are no concrete details about the proposal at this point. We will, of course, inform you as and when further information emerges.

Government Guidance

Guidance that the Government has prepared for parents / carers can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/closure-of-educational-settings-information-for-parents-and-carers>

As always, I thank you all for your patience and understanding during these most difficult of times. I appreciate that there will be differing views on the Government's decision to re-open school at this point and also on the plan that we have formulated to make this request work for the children and families at Chesterton. You may also be aware of different approaches being taken by local authorities and academy chains nationally, or by schools in our local area. If you do compare our approach with those being taken elsewhere (whether you think it is better, worse or somewhere in between), please bear in mind that all schools will be facing their own unique set of circumstances and challenges – some very different from our own, and some that may not be able to be shared with parents.

I can say that I am extremely proud of how our school community has pulled together throughout the past two months. Pupils, their families, and our staff have risen to this challenge - one that was unimaginable at the start of this year - in the most impressive way. I would like to record my thanks to all of you. Our collective response so far fills me with hope and confidence that we can overcome this next challenging phase in a similar fashion.

Stay safe.

Kind regards,

Mr Horner



Chesterton CE Primary School

Generosity Integrity Humility Compassion Respect Resilience