Dear Parents and Carers,

I wrote to you last week following the Government’s announcement that that schools should re-open in phases to pupils from Early Years (Reception and Nursery), Year 1 and Year 6 from the 1st of June, and their wish for pupils from all other years groups to return to school after that and before the end of term.

I explained that before this is possible, a number of conditions will need to have been met to get to this point and any return for children in these year groups is still likely to be gradual and staggered – especially for a big school like ours.

Before this latest announcement we had already begun a whole school risk assessment to ensure that we look at how we could make the school as safe as possible for staff and pupils to return after the half term break. Our risk assessment includes making arrangements such as:

- Staggering the opening and closing times of the school for different classes and groups
- Changing timetables because many usual activities will not be able to take place in the way we normally do them – for example, lessons, breaktimes, lunchtimes, Assemblies, playtimes etc
- Children may not be taught in their usual classroom, or by their usual teacher/teaching assistant, due to staff availability and smaller group sizes
- Ensuring we have adequate staffing levels to implement this plan
- Movement around the school will be limited and we will implement a one way system wherever possible
- Limiting the number of parents on the school site and not permitting parents/carers to enter the school building
- No hot school meals and all pupils will need to bring/order a packed lunch which our lunch prover, Caterlink, will provide
- Our Breakfast and ALL Afterschool and lunchtime clubs will remain closed
- Carrying out extra cleaning of the school, lots of clear signage and floor/playground markings to help pupils keep a safe distance from each other, from other groups and from adults
- Extra supplies of soap, hand sanitisers, paper towels and tissues
While we continue to work towards re-opening in the summer term in line with the Government request, we do not yet have all of these elements in place to ensure that it is safe to re-open the school in the week beginning 1st June.

One of our biggest challenges right now is staff availability to work due to their own or family circumstances, which requires them to “shield” or be “shielded” due to health issues. This affects both teaching and non-teaching staff teams. This situation could impact on the day to day running of the school in relation to our school Office, our cleaning and site management, as well as pupil/adult ratios in classrooms.

This decision to delay reopening has not been taken lightly as we know that many of you are worried that your children missing school and the impact this could have on their learning and their wellbeing. This concerns us too which is why our teachers are working really hard to continue to deliver a comprehensive programme of online learning, and we know from your feedback and telephone conversations that you value this. We also continue to maintain phone contact with many families and to try to resolve any problems which you report about your online access.

In the meantime, nothing has changed with regard to our school provision – we will remain closed, with limited provision only for the children of key-workers whose work is critical to the Covid-19 response and who are unable to keep their children safely at home.

Please continue to follow the Government’s advice and help to control the virus. This means you must:

- Stay at home as much as possible
- Work from home if you can
- Limit contact with other people
- Keep your distance if you go out
- Wash your hands regularly
- Follow COVID-19 guidance to self-isolate if you or a family member develop symptoms

I would like to assure you that we are working hard to iron out some of the challenges above so that we can reopen the school safely and in phases as soon as possible, and we continue to liaise with our school staff, Governors and the Local Authority to overcome this. We will keep you informed about developments and a timetable for reopening as soon as we can.

Once again, I would ask for your patience and understanding at this time.

Thank you for your continued support and I send my very best wishes to you and your family,

Yours sincerely,

Ms L Shaw