Dear Parents and Carers,

You will have seen that the government are proposing that children in Reception, Year 1 and Year 6 could possibly return to school on 1st June 2020.

Whilst we would be delighted to see our children again we have listened to parental views and we are closely following all the advice circulating at this moment in time.

I am trying to understand the scientific evidence (the same evidence that is being interpreted very differently in the other three UK nations) to understand why we are coming back with the virus still so virulent.

The science says that, thankfully, children do not suffer seriously with this illness.

The science is inconclusive as to whether children can pass it to adults. For this reason, teaching unions are asking us NOT to take part in the plan to reopen.

The British Medical Association said with so much "conflicting" evidence on opening schools, it was "completely aligned" with teachers' union calls to delay reopening.

"Until we have got case numbers much lower, we should not consider reopening schools," said a letter from the BMA's council chair. (15th May 2020)

My hope, and I believe the hope of the government, is that new cases will have dropped appreciably by June 1st and then further again by the time it is being proposed Years 2, 3, 4, and 5 may return.

If this turns out to be the case, then all well and good. I for one though, will be watching these figures very carefully and listening to the scientific advice. If the figures go down, as we all hope, then we will send out our plan for how the first three year groups will return to school on June 1st.

If the figures are no better, or if they worsen with this first phase of lifting the lockdown, we will follow union advice. This will be in interests of our children and our staff. We also want to work very closely with each family.
As a recent article in The Guardian argues:

‘In Italy, Spain and Ireland schoolchildren will not return until autumn at the earliest. Wales and Scotland are leaning the same way. Yet, in England, politicians are putting their efforts into fighting with the unions for an early return – and one that initially offers just three year groups a poor, socially distanced, in-a-school-but-not-really-school experience for, at best, six weeks before the end of term.

Gavin Williamson, the education secretary in England, should stop looking for fights. Instead, he should pause, and focus schools on doing distance learning really well by setting minimum standards for the remainder of the academic year. It seems right, for example, that every child should speak with a teacher at least once a week and receive meaningful feedback on work they have completed during that time.’ (16th May 2020)

If we do open on June 1st, then arrangements for how that will be done will be sent out before we close for half term.

I am now going to give you the information, within questions and answers. In this way, you will be able to make an informed decision about whether you want to send your child to school, after June 1st, 2020.

Questions and Answers:

Q: Will School be open for all children in Reception, Year One and Year Six?
A: Yes. We are only allowed to have groups of 15 in each classroom space for infection control and our risk assessment may mean that this figure is lower. We need to make sure that our systems and processes, timetabling and routines are safe and that risk assessment is accurate and precise.

Q: Is it safe for my child to be in school?
A: Unfortunately, I cannot offer any guarantees – that is for the scientists. All I can do is assure you that the proper risk assessments will be in place and we will endeavour to apply all the control measures to limit infection spreading, as per government guidelines. The full guidelines are here, if you are interested https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/actions-for-educational-and-childcare-settings-to-prepare-for-wider-opening-from-1-june-2020/actions-for-education-and-childcare-settings-to-prepare-for-wider-openingfrom-1-june-2020
Q: Will my child be with their friends?
A: As far as possible within the spaces we are planning to use. However, because children are in smaller groups, once they are within this group, they will be unable to meet with other friends, within other classrooms or groupings. This is to keep to infection control guidelines.

Q: My child has a brother or sister in Y2,3,4 or 5. Can they come to school, from June 1st?
A: I am really sorry but this is not possible, or within the guidelines.

Q: Will the children be learning in school, as normal?
A: Learning will not be ‘as normal’ and the requirements to teach a broad and balanced curriculum are dis-applied. Of course, children will continue with the home / school learning, guided by the teacher, within school, but the primary focus will be on friendship (social and emotional development) and readjusting to school routine. We will continue to access the Oak National Academy especially if, as anticipated after speaking to parents, we only have small numbers attending the setting. (7 out of 39 parents in YR,Y1,Y6 combined said they would send their child in if the school opened in June 2020).

Q: How will you keep my child safe?
A: Through proper risk assessment, as far as possible we will:

- Ensure that children and adults avoid contact with anyone who has symptoms of COVID19
  - Ensure frequent hand washing cleaning and good hygiene practices
- Clean the settings more regularly and throughout the day
- Minimise contact between other adults and children, once established in their group.
  - Children will have their own tables with their own equipment
- Children and adults are NOT required to wear PPE, only in the case of a child needing first aid, toileting support or displaying COVID symptoms.
- A packed lunch will be required and we can order these from Etwell Catering

- Q: Will I be fined if I decide NOT to return my child to school?
  - A: No, you will not be fined under any circumstance. This decision is for you to make, at an extraordinary and difficult time. The school will not be held to account for any non-attendance either.

- Q: If I do not send my child to school, will I still get the Free School Meal vouchers I have been getting?
  - A: Yes, you will still be eligible for free school meal vouchers and these will be sent to you weekly, if you are eligible.

- Q: Can my child wear a face mask?
- A: Children will NOT be allowed to wear a face mask and this is in accordance with government guidelines. This is because children do not know how to wear them properly, adjust with their fingers and then potentially spread the infection.

- Q: I am unwell and classed as clinically vulnerable. Should I send my child to school?

- A: If someone in your child’s household is clinically vulnerable, they should only attend if stringent social distancing can be adhered to, and the child is able to understand and follow those instructions.

- Q: Do I have to decide now if I want my child to return to school or inform you that I am keeping them at home?

- A: No, we will ask you to confirm before the school closes for half term. It is important to remember that all of these plans may not go ahead, if the R rate increases and the infection begins to climb again. You have time to think – I know it will be a difficult decision and you need time and, in many ways, more information as the situation develops and changes.

- I have tried to make a best guess at the questions you might want answering.

Kindest regards and keep safe,

Mrs Jayne Stevenson