

15th May 2020

Dear Parents and Carers

As I am sure you are aware, this week there has been a lot of information and speculation about returning children in England to school after the Whit holidays. There has been a lot of guidance and other material from many different sources for schools to digest and we are working through each bit of information as it comes our way.

I met remotely with the leadership team on Tuesday to discuss our initial ideas around safely welcoming children back to school. The guidance and some of the detail has changed since then, but the over-riding principle that we were working to on Tuesday remains at the heart of all future planning and decision making in this period of dealing with Covid-19. All decision making in school will be rooted in implementing what is safest and best for all children and adults connected to the St. Matthew's community.

Unfortunately, a lot of what we need to know remains unknown at the moment, so we will proceed with due caution. After seeing how some other sectors have been unprepared to deal with working safely in the presence of this virus, I feel it is essential that we have the right systems in place to make sure we can run the school safely when we open up further. I am happy to say that our approach over the last few weeks has worked in managing any potential spread of infection, so we have a good starting point.

I am not able to give any great detail of our plan as yet, we will release that at a later date when we have all of the information that we need. What we do know is that school will not be the same as it was before we went into lockdown. What we will do, is try to make the curriculum and the environment as supportive as possible to each child's physical and mental well-being in these difficult circumstances.

As it is very difficult to socially distance in schools, the guidance that we have at the moment states that each group of pupils should be treated as a separate 'bubble' to reduce the chances of transmission of Coronavirus. This is where we will need our families to play their part. Some of the children in school have spoken about having sleepovers or visiting family members. I'm sure you have all seen large groups of people milling about from time to time too. To control the spread of infection within our school community, everyone has to follow the social distancing guidelines that have been set out. This is vital to ensure that pupils and staff are as safe as they can possibly be.

Our plan for the reopening of school at the moment is to have a phased approach. We plan to build capacity over days and weeks after the holidays so that we can ensure that the site and the people in it are as safe as they can possibly be. Some of you may have reservations about sending your child to school at this time and we will give you the chance to have your say on the detailed proposals when we have finalised them.

In the meantime, we will be working to put together something that will work for when children do return more fully. We are looking forward to having a school full of children again in the future. We are looking forward to seeing parents and grandparents on the playground. We're looking forward to going on school trips and welcoming you all to plays and concerts. We will get there, one step at a time. Thank you again for your support.

Kind regards

Mr Stephen Murphy
Headteacher