

21st May 2020

Dear Parents and Carers,

Firstly, I want to thank you for your support during the Coronavirus pandemic. Being at home with your child(ren) and supporting their continued learning, alongside your own work and wellbeing, is a significant challenge in what are both unprecedented and worrying times.

As you are aware the Government has instructed schools to open to a limited number of pupils from June 1st. In special schools it is suggested a phased return of children, if the conditions are right, for some additional pupils irrespective of which year group they may be in.

There has been much speculation and debate in the media on the benefits and concerns about bringing more children back into school by this target date, and the challenge it is presenting to us all cannot be underestimated. There is a balance which needs to be found between ensuring measures are put in place to limit as far as is possible the risk of transmission of the virus, and ensuring that our children still feel safe, secure and 'at home' in our schools. There is also the responsibility we have towards ensuring our staff are kept as safe as possible.

Cedars is committed to welcoming back pupils over the coming weeks and months in a safe, gradual and planned way. We have been giving careful consideration to how we can achieve this. This has included scrutiny of the many national and local guidance documents published, as well as consultations with our colleagues from our partner special schools, Gateshead LA and other stakeholders.

Reopening school to more children and staff will be complex, even if that is partial reopening. The priority, of course, will be to ensure that it is safe for all children, staff and parents when they return to school. For school to reopen, clear protocols on social distancing, hygiene and protection will be required as well as ensuring that the appropriate level of staffing is achievable.

We are extremely conscious of the need to reopen school in a managed, proactive way. We are also acutely aware that limiting the number of children going back to school and gradually increasing numbers reduces risk of transmission; therefore, we plan to offer places to children in phases.

One of our earliest tasks is to identify and agree which pupils will be in the Phase 1 of reopening school. In doing so we have refreshed our risk assessments for each individual child, assessed class sizes and capacity in light of distancing and hygiene requirements, and considered the organisation of classrooms and other learning environments that minimise interactions and provide sufficient space for children to learn safely. We have also considered how to keep small groups of children together throughout the day, within consistent and familiar teaching teams, and to avoid groups of children mixing outside of the teaching room.

During the next few days, teaching team leads will arrange an individual discussion with each of you. The purpose of the discussion is to enable you to better understand our plans, to listen to your concerns, try to answer your questions and to provide you with the information you need to begin to consider a return to school plan that is the most appropriate for you and your child's needs. I must make it clear that you will be under no obligation or pressure to send your child to school. If you choose to continue with school supported learning at home we will be happy to continue to support your decision.

If it is agreed that your child should be returning to school during Phase 1 of reopening school, and only when all risks have been assessed and all safety measures are in place, with your agreement we will initiate the return to school plan for your child.

If it is agreed that your child should not be returning to school during Phase 1 of reopening school we will continue with school supported home learning. As it becomes feasible and safe for us to increase the number of children in school we will then consult with you as to whether your child will be included in Phase 2 of reopening school.

We are acutely aware that whatever plan is agreed for your child it should be responsive to need. We are also very aware that your child's needs and your own are changing with time. We will continue to keep in regular contact with you, supporting learning and responding to your concerns and changes in need. The plan will be under constant review, with your involvement, and any changes needed will be made in consultation with you and with your consent.

Thank you for your patience, your unwavering care, and the fantastic job you have been doing supporting the home learning of your child(ren).

If you would like to discuss anything further, please do get in touch through the usual channels.

Our thoughts and best wishes continue to be with you and your families during this challenging time.

Yours sincerely,



Martin Flowers

Head Teacher

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