



Gladstone Road Primary School

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Head teacher: Mr. G. Johnson

"Learning to Succeed"

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14th May 2020

Dear Parents and Carers,

COVID-19 – School Update for Parents – Letter 1

Thank you for continuing to work with us and for your unwavering support – it is much appreciated!

Like you, my team and I found out from the Government's announcement on Sunday that schools can now begin to plan for a phased re-opening after 1st June. The advice is:

We may be able, from the week commencing 1 June, to welcome back more children to early years, school and further education settings. We will only do this provided that the 5 key tests set by government justify the changes at the time, including that the rate of infection is decreasing and the enabling programmes set out in the recovery strategy are operating effectively. As a result, we are asking schools, colleges and childcare providers to plan on this basis, ahead of confirmation that these tests are met.

As a school, we are beginning to plan for the possibility of opening the school up to more children. This involves working out our staffing ratios, risk assessing school, predicting pupil numbers and above all planning how we can potentially keep everyone safe. As always, I am being honest and transparent and I thought it would be useful for you to gain an insight into the challenges we are now facing in school.

The risk assessment is the most worrying part of this process for us and it is crucial that we wait for further advice from the Government, Local Authority and the Unions. Our immediate concerns are:

- We are already seeing a rise in child numbers for 'key workers' and requests for more child places as more workplaces reopen. Our daily number is increasing to 50 children already. They will now need to be looked after in groups of 15 due to the amount of staff we have available. The groups size of 15 is the Government's recommended maximum number. Groups of 15 children make it near impossible to adhere to the 2 metre social distancing measures at all times, despite the staff's best efforts. More requests for places are coming in daily, which we are going to try and accommodate if there is absolutely no-one else in the households to look after these children.
- If we increase our numbers to the recommended mainstream children in addition to the children already accessing the child care, we are potentially looking at numbers rising to 400 children. We simply would not have the staffing or the classroom space to enable us to do this so would need to offer the mainstream provision on a rota basis.
- With the child numbers rising to multiple hundreds, keeping our staff and children safe would not be possible in my view. Toileting, handwashing, cleaning of the furniture and moving around school in our narrow Victorian corridors would make social distancing and the basic hygiene non-negotiables impossible.
- The safety for parents and carers during drop-off and collection is also a worry and a consideration in our planning.

There is a belief that when the children attend school they will be taught. As you can appreciate the children will be split into groups of 15 with any available adult. Many of our staff are not coming into school due to their own personal circumstances and vulnerabilities, which is also a priority for school leaders as we try to keep everyone safe. This means that the children will not be taught but will be given tasks that are manageable for the staff available.



Also, as more staff are drafted into school, they will not be available to deliver the home learning offer, which we currently have in place. This is also a worry for us and until we know what the school offer will look like, we cannot plan for this.

I hope this letter provides you some clarity into what is happening behind the scenes. Hopefully we will have some more information and guidance from the Government etc soon, which we can pass on to you and incorporate into our plans. It is down to you as parents and carers if you want to send your children into school as and when possible. I would also urge the families that are using or wanting to use our current child care offer for key workers to consider if they actually need it. Is there someone in the household that could look after the children without the need to send them in? The increasing numbers are putting a strain on us before we even consider opening up to mainstream children. A member of staff is going to contact the parents/carers of the children currently accessing the school to double check that the provision is still needed.

I'm sorry if this letter comes across as a bleak message, but I just thought it was important for you to understand the problems we are now facing as a school. Of course, we want nothing more than to be able to open up the doors and welcome everyone back. The sooner we can get back to normal the better – I'm sure we all agree on that.

I will be back in touch next week. Please do continue to check our school website/Facebook page regularly for updates. Thanks again for your support and until this is over, well done to everyone for managing and keeping going during this extraordinary and challenging time.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'G. Johnson', written in a cursive style.

Mr Garry Johnson
Head Teacher