

Farway Church of England Primary School

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Dear Parents

The government has announced that schools should start to plan for pupils in Nursery (where applicable), Reception, Year 1 and Year 6 to be able to have a phased return to school at some point after 1st June. The schools within The Jubilee with Pebblebed Federation are considering how best they can safely follow the government guidance for these groups, as well as for the children of critical workers, who will also continue to attend.

Each day in the last week documents have arrived with us from the Department for Education containing additional information about the phased return to school for some year groups. Health and Safety checklists from the Local Authority, based on the ever-changing guidance, arrived with us late on Friday.

I would like to reiterate that all advice emphasises that a phased return has to be managed with extreme caution and care so that all protective measures can be put into place. We are quickly learning that this may mean it becomes necessary to take a more gradual approach than the government has indicated. Pupil and staff safety remains the primary concern in our planning and it may not be possible to welcome back all the pupils in the way that the Prime Minister has described. It is looking more likely that any phased return to the schools in our federation will not begin until at least Monday 8th June at the earliest, and our plans may not include all year groups that the Prime Minister has indicated.

All schools differ in some way, such as number of pupils and staff, size and layout of the buildings and outdoor space as well as the facilities that they have. This means that as Executive Headteacher, working closely with my Co-Chairs of Governors, I need to make arrangements for each school's return which ensures the safety of children and staff. How this can be done may be different to other schools in our federation and in the locality. I am working closely, however, with other headteachers in the Honiton Learning Community. The overall aim is the same for all school leaders, to keep everyone as safe as they possibly can.

Consequently we are now evaluating whether and how it might be safe to expand the number of children attending school, subject to risk assessments based on our specific circumstances. Our challenges mainly lie with the difficulties of social distancing for young pupils, how to maintain small groups and ensure pupils do not mix at any point during the day, availability of school staff - many of whom are having to stay at home for shielding purposes, provision of school meals, the need for repeated sanitising and thorough cleaning, keeping all non-staff personnel off site (including parents) in order to minimise social contact, use of the general space available and the appropriateness of the environment, including access to toilets and hand washing.

Schools need to make adjustments to classrooms and other spaces for children to attend in small groups. We need to remove items, particularly in Early Years' classrooms, that are difficult to keep constantly cleaned. We need to purchase additional resources to ensure there is enough equipment to mean that children don't need to share. We also need to purchase a lot more cleaning and sanitising products. We need to provide our staff with training for working in a very different way and with extra health and safety protocols. We need to plan a revised curriculum using the reduced amount of physical resources that pupils and staff will have access to and also to support the children's mental health needs. We also need to make sure that we can continue to support the children who are still at home, with their learning. All of this needs to be carefully planned and risk assessed, with new policies and procedures written and put in place, before any date for children to start to return can be confirmed.

What would be really helpful to us at this time is to get a sense of the scale for demand of places. Therefore we would be really grateful (if your child is in Nursery, Reception, Year 1 or Year 6) if you could indicate at this stage as to whether you do or don't intend to send your child back to school following a phased re-opening at some point after 1 June. Please send an email entitled 'Phased Return Preferences' to the admin@farway.devon.sch.uk email address confirming your child's name and whether or not you wish them to return once we are open for their year group.

Once we have that information I can plan, alongside my Co-Chairs of Governors, the next stage of detail required and be in a position to share this with you.

I would like to take this opportunity to say how extremely grateful we are for your support, encouragement and kind words throughout this whole crisis. In return I would like to reassure you that we are working hard to get this right for you and your children and thus avoid taking unnecessary risks.

Please ensure you continue to check the school website on a daily basis. Important notices will be indicated on the home page but the 'Parent Tab' contains the 'Coronavirus' section which will be where I put any update letters. Also on this page are home learning activities, support for pupil mental health, Acts of Worship and other Church School related activities as well as other messages and notices that staff would like to share.

Please continue to stay well and keep safe.



Katie Gray

(Executive Headteacher)