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June 1st 2020

Dear Parents/Carers,

I hope you all enjoyed half term and managed to get outside and take advantage of the glorious weather.

Thank you to the many of you who contacted me to support the school's decision not to re-open to reception and year 1 just yet. As you will, no doubt, be aware there is much controversy about re-opening primary schools in England.

During the last week, I spent time planning for the return of classes. Planning entailed reading the Department for Education's guidance and updates (over 40 updates since May 19th), reading the SAGE (Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies) report, the Independent SAGE report, listening to the Cabinet ministers such as Nick Gibb (Minister of State for Education) explain the rationale for primary school children returning, reading the teaching union guidance, following the daily updates on the R rate (currently at 0.7 – 1.0) and risk level (currently 4). There are many contradictions in the guidance but SAGE have urged caution over the re-opening of schools with the current risk level and R rate and Independent SAGE argues that June 15th is the earliest that schools should be considering a more wider opening as the risk is halved compared to June 1st.

Given the plethora of guidance coming from all directions, I have decided to postpone the opening for Y6 until June 15th. I apologise for the disappointment that the children will feel in the delay but I would rather err on the side of caution. When I first wrote to you about the plan, the DfE had still not released any guidance, Both SAGE groups had yet to release their latest reports and none of us could have predicted the current level of COVID-19 with any certainty.

We have a detailed risk assessment and are confident that we are able to minimise risks for when children return more widely and staff are very keen to get back into the classroom and see the children again. I will summarise the risk assessment in a future letter before Y6 return.

If any of you feel anxious about sending your child to school, Dr Matt Butler's recorded Zoom meeting with school leaders in Cambridgeshire is well worth listening to:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K2bEm_Nvlpc . Dr Butler is a COVID-19 assessor from Addenbrooke's hospital. Staff and governors have found his advice and assessment of the risks in school, reassuring.



We will still continue to provide the places in school for children of key workers and those who need to return to work as we have done for the past few weeks. Once Year 6 have been in school for a week, we will be reviewing the next stage of re-opening school further to other year groups with the plan that all classes will have an opportunity to be back before the end of term. This will, of course, depend on scientific evidence at the time.

If you would like any further information about the above, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Home learning for the new term is now on the website and we will deliver home-learning packs that are usually sent in the post later today (unless you collect the packs from the box in school). There are also spare exercise books outside Owls classroom should your child need a new one.

Year 5 parents, I will be in contact as soon as I have an update from the KCC about the Kent test and look forward to seeing you later in the week via Zoom.

As always, stay safe.

Best wishes

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Al Higgins". The signature is written in a cursive style and is placed on a light blue rectangular background.

Alison Higgins