



Ox Close Federation

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Thursday 14th May 2020

Dear Parents/Carers,

We are writing to you to update you upon the situation with regard to the UK Government's proposed re-opening of schools in England. As you know, the Government have announced that, subject to their 5 tests being met, primary schools will re-open in some way for pupils in Reception, Year 1 and Year 6 from 1st June. Nursery schools will also re-open at this time. We appreciate that this is a time of concern for everyone and so we are seeking to provide you with all necessary information.

The Prime Minister has conceded that currently the Government are not fully meeting these 5 tests and that re-opening is conditional upon this changing.

These 5 tests are:

1. Making sure that the NHS can cope.
2. A sustained and consistent fall in the daily death rate.
3. The rate of infection decreasing to manageable levels (the R rate to be well under 1).
4. Ensuring test capacity is in place (testing would need to be available for children and staff and track and tracing capacity which is not the case currently)
5. Ensuring that the re-opening of schools and the lifting of other restrictions would not risk a second peak which overwhelms the NHS.

It is also important to note that unions representing all staff are concerned by the proposed return and have raised these concerns with the Government several times, both before the Prime Minister's announcement on Sunday and since then and this is relevant as the concerns affect both pupils and staff. These questions relate to the science upon which the Government is modelling and planning but as of last night, there had been no response at all from the Government. All concerned are understandably keen to ensure that conditions are safe for staff as well as pupils. If the Government do not find agreement with the unions then this will also affect the proposed return. At this stage, the Government have not published the science which lies behind their decision and the Department for Education's scientific adviser yesterday explained that there was only 'low confidence that children transmit Covid-19 any less than adults'. Needless to say, it is important that there are reassurances on this matter in the period between now and the proposed return.

The basis of science is testing and proving and we are at a very early stage in terms of understanding the virus. Over the past 24 hours there have been reports of the recent emergence of Paediatric Inflammatory Multi-System Syndrome, which is a Kawasaki disease type illness, in a small number of 5 - 16 year olds and doctors are investigating links with COVID-19. It is fair to say that there are many unknowns at the moment.



Over the past 3 days, the Government has issued several guidance documents. Some of these have been intended to assist school leaders in planning for the proposed return and ultimately school leaders have a huge responsibility. The safety and welfare of pupils and staff must be at the heart of all decisions, something which has been a guiding principle to me throughout my career. Never has that principle been more crucial than it is now.

The considerations are twofold:

1. Given the guidance frameworks, available space and staff, proposed numbers of pupils and the Government's scientific evidence is it safe to re-open the school?
2. If so, having carried out extensive risk assessments, on what basis can this proceed?

At this stage it is important to note that, given the available staff and space, school life would be extremely different to what has normally been the case in order to attempt to ensure the safety of all. Pupils would be in small groups, would not interact with other groups and would not be in school full time. There has been much surprise nationally at the decision to re-open for Nursery and Reception pupils and Local Authority advisers have issued us with guidance to share with the parents of children in these groups will be sent via a text link to you today.

The Risk Assessment process is crucial and as part of this, the Government have asked us to establish the likely pupil numbers should the school re-open.

Guidance for parents has been issued by the Government and a link is included here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/closure-of-educational-settings-information-for-parents-and-carers/reopening-schools-and-other-educational-settings-from-1-june>

This guidance notes the Government's rationale and advice to parents. We would be hugely grateful if you could read this, particularly if your child is in Nursery, Reception, Year 1 or Year 6.

Later today, a survey will be sent to the parents of children who are in Nursery, Reception, Year 1 and Year 6 via text link and we would really appreciate it if you could complete as soon as possible. This survey will ask whether, in the event of re-opening on June 1st, you will be sending your child to school. The options will be 'Yes', 'No' and 'Unsure' and there will be a space to ask questions if you are currently unsure. Please note that this will be an anonymous survey and you will therefore not be tied to any decision you provide on the survey. Providing us with this information will help us to make the absolute best decisions in terms of risk assessments. The virus cannot be seen and so therefore all we can do is to try to ensure that all sensible precautions are taken if it is deemed that we are to reopen. The Government provide advice and guidelines but, while they are keen for children to return for a variety of reasons, they are not enforcing school attendance by law at this time and ultimately parents need to be fully satisfied that their children are fully safe at this time of unprecedented national crisis.

Please be assured that any decisions that are taken will have the safety of pupils and staff as the absolute prime consideration.

Yours faithfully,

D Harrison
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Miss Bowden
Head of School

J Taylor
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