

To parents of pupils in Year 6

23rd May 2020

Dear parents,

I hope that you and your families had a rewarding and enjoyable final week before the half term break.

The management team and I are very grateful for all of the comments and queries which we have received from you following my letter of Saturday 16th May. As I said in that letter, the constraints of time mean that we have not been able to respond to you individually, but please rest assured that all of your contributions have been read and given careful consideration as we continue to make provisional plans for welcoming Year 6 pupils back onto the school site.

Reading all of your comments has been yet another reminder to me of what a very challenging time we have all had to cope with. Each one of the families in our Taunton School community has been affected in different ways, and it is impossible for me to know and understand the complexities of everyone's individual situation. What I do know, however, is that our school community can be extremely proud of the way it has responded, and it has been inspiring to witness the high levels of compassion, empathy and understanding which have shone through on a daily basis.

The issue of re-opening schools has continued to be a major news item during the last week and it is an ever-changing picture in terms of the guidance issued by the Government. The guidance document which I hyperlinked for you in my letter last week has subsequently been revised, and there are at least six other government guidance documents from which we are working.

It would be lovely if provisional plans for the return of Year 6 pupils could be made so as to provide each one of our pupils, parents and staff with their perfect solution, satisfying everyone's wishes as well as complying with all government guidance. I only wish we could, but it is, alas, impossible. I hope, however, that the attached Question and Answer document shows how we are doing all that we can to balance all of the factors in a fair and balanced manner.

The attached Qs and As set out the School's current position, but there will be revisions and changes to this document which will remain a dynamic work in progress. In addition to these Qs and As, there are a number of other key documents which we have in draft form, including a detailed risk assessment, afternoon timetables for the pupils, rules for pupils re behaviour, social distancing and hygiene (e.g washing hands), protocols re cleaning (and other protective measures) and information for parents (e.g. drop-off, pick up, how to contact the school etc). All relevant detail from these documents will of course be communicated to pupils and parents at the appropriate time.

If you have been following the news on this topic, you will appreciate that plans to have Year 6 pupils back on site from 1st June are still very much of a provisional nature. The Government has not yet confirmed its request for schools to go ahead, and seems to be emphasising in recent days that it is 1st June 'at the earliest'. We shall have to wait and see. For the sake of clarity on this point, I have copied into this letter the relevant Q and A from our document.

When might be the first day back on site for Year 6 pupils?

The Government has said that it will be June 1st at the earliest but that it will give further confirmation. It has been reported in the press that May 28th is a likely date for further confirmation. Even if the Government confirms its request, and sets June 1st as the start date, we would not consider it safe for

us to have pupils onsite on June 1st. For the first few days after half term, we would need to digest all communication issued by the Government between now and then, and review our policies, risk assessments, protocols and procedures (which are all currently in draft form). We would also need to communicate salient information to pupils, parents and staff, and spend time on staff training. We cannot commit now to a start date, but it would be June 3rd at the earliest when we would consider it sufficiently safe for us to welcome pupils back on site. It may be later than June 3rd. The most important thing is that, whenever pupils do return on site, it is well organised, calm and as safe as it can be for pupils and staff; there is no need for it to be rushed, and it should not be rushed.

The fact is that, unlike many pupils in the maintained sector, your children have been benefitting from a very effective remote learning programme, and will continue to do so. The Government's provisional plans are sometimes labelled the 're-opening of schools', but we have been far more open than the large majority of schools up and down the country. Our priority must be to maintain for pupils in all year groups the high level of education and personal development which they have been enjoying since the start of term. We will comply to the best of our ability with the Government's request regarding the provisional return of Year 6 pupils onto our site, but we must ensure that it does not adversely impact upon pupils who are not yet coming back on site (including pupils in Year 6 who will continue to be at home).

Once you have read the Q and A document, it would be very helpful if each of you could click on the link in the attached email to indicate how you are feeling currently with regard to sending your child into school if and when we give you the option to do so. What you indicate will not be binding, and it will be perfectly acceptable for you to change your mind. Please could you, by the end of Wednesday 27th May, indicate 'yes' (meaning that you are currently intending to send your child into school) 'no' or 'unsure'. You are also able to make any further comments should you wish to do so.

I am anticipating that my next communication with you will be on or around 29th May based on the assumption that the Government will be giving further guidance on 28th May. I hope that you can all have an enjoyable half term break with some very well deserved rest. Thank you again for all of your wonderful support for your children's education and for the school. It has been inspiring and hugely rewarding to see the progress being made in terms of the pupils' work and personal development during these unprecedented times.

With best wishes,
Yours sincerely,



Andrew Edwards