

**Message from Mr. Pavey**

It has been another long a stressful week. Firstly, I want to thank all those of you who responded to the survey regarding reopening school to more children. It was very moving reading all your comments. It is clear that you are so torn in your decision as to whether or not to send your children back to school before the holidays and I have really appreciated the many messages of support and thanks that we received.

The comments and the results of the survey have helped the Governors and I come closer to a decision on how we might reopen. In line with many other schools in Newton Aycliffe, we have agreed that due to the outbreak of Coronavirus in a large local business which employs many of our parents/carers it would not be appropriate to open on the 1<sup>st</sup> June as the Government had asked us to plan for. This will give us the opportunity to monitor further how the outbreak impacts on the wider Newton Aycliffe community. We are therefore considering reopening to children in Year 6 from the 8<sup>th</sup> June. This is again on the condition that we feel that it is safe to do so.

From the results of the survey, of those parents/carers who are considering sending their child back to school before the holidays, 90% expressed a positive view of a part-time return to school. Many parents/carers expressed concerns regarding how children will cope with returning to school after such a long time away and that full-time would be too much for their child. Whilst plans are still to be confirmed we are working towards a plan that the Year 6 children whose parents/carers want them to, will come back to school from 8<sup>th</sup> June on a part-time basis. This is likely to be for two consecutive days of a week where they will be taught by their teacher or at least by an adult they are familiar with. This will enable class sizes to be kept as low as possible and increase the levels of social distancing possible.

Once school are comfortable with the new systems and are confident that the safety of children is enabled then we will consider bringing the Year 1 children in using the same system from 15<sup>th</sup> June. Again if this goes well then we will invite the Reception children from 22<sup>nd</sup> June.

To some this will seem a reasonable plan, to others too cautious and to others too rushed. What is important is that the decision whether or not to send your child rests solely with you. We will support whatever decision you make.

We will send a firm plan to all Year 6 children's parents by 3<sup>rd</sup> June along with another survey asking them to confirm whether or not they will be sending their child back. Each week, we plan to send out the plan to the next year group and find out how many children will definitely be coming back.

All this may change but I felt it important to let you know where our plans, based on the feedback that we have had from staff, governors and yourselves, were heading. We will constantly assess the levels of risk locally and nationally which will be taken into account at every stage. At any point we feel that it is unsafe we will again close the school. The safety of the children is paramount and supersedes all other ambitions to get life back to normal.

The Government have said that they are not providing school meal vouchers over the holiday and from the 1<sup>st</sup> June, as we prepare for the reopening of school, we will go back to the system we had at the beginning of lockdown where we provide packed lunches from children eligible for Free School Meals. These will be delivered to homes on the 1<sup>st</sup> June with a letter outlining how the provision of Free School Meals will continue from that point on. This will be instead of the Voucher system so no new vouchers will be issued from 1<sup>st</sup> June.

A team of staff members have been working hard to develop the Microsoft Teams learning platform which will be rolled out to Junior children from the 1<sup>st</sup> June. Please bear with us as we move to this system of home learning because the staff will need to be trained in how to use this. All being well, if you have a junior child in school, you will be made aware of how to use this system early that week.

Infant children will use Clasdojo more to share their learning from home.

In both cases we will support families to access either Teams or Dojo and we understand that adjustments will have to be made for those families who don't have access to the relevant technology.

We all want the children to return to school as soon as possible and a major condition of this is that the virus is under control. I would urge everyone to continue to do their part in following the Government guidance.

I hope to see you all soon and wish you a lovely half term holiday.