

22 June 2020

Dear Parents and Carers,

**Covid 19 update**

I am writing to explain the situation that we find ourselves in at present and to reassure you that we continue to work very hard to meet the needs of all of our children, whether they are in school or at home. We have piloted some online lessons last week and are looking to roll these out for every year group this week. As such, the teachers need time to be able to deliver these lessons and so no year group can be offered full time provision.

The full time provision offer has to be prioritised, as per government guidelines, to the children of critical workers and to those children that are deemed vulnerable. Whilst in lockdown, the numbers in these groups have been larger than in most local schools and requests for places continue to rise.

We have a number of members of staff who are absent and will continue to be unavailable for in school work and so we have now reached the point where we cannot accommodate all of the groups the government have asked for us to have in school if we are to continue to support the children of key workers and vulnerable children.

We are making contingency plans that focus on a change in the groupings and more blended learning (online lessons).

This may mean that we are unable to offer the year group places going forwards in the next four weeks and I want to prepare you for this should we need to change our plans.

If this is the case, we have decided that it is vitally important in terms of transition to try and keep the reception and year 6 bubbles open. We know from evidence that the importance of smooth transition in to school and from one key stage to another is vital in terms of a child’s development. This is why we are going to prioritise those year groups alongside the critical workers and vulnerable children.

As you can imagine, the daily changes to the groups and staff absence is making it extremely challenging to manage numbers of requested places. If your child is in a year group bubble and you qualify for key worker status, we can only move your child from one bubble to another with a quarantine break of seven days between the bubbles. This is to minimise the risk of cross contamination. Any staff working in a bubble who need to move bubbles must also have seven days isolation for the same reasons. As you can see, it is a logistical challenge to work from week to week not knowing numbers of staff and children in attendance. For this reason, we would like to remind you that should you require a place for your child, we will need two weeks’ notice in order to make the necessary arrangements. I appreciate the challenge many of you have with work and am so grateful to you for your support in managing your work commitments to support us. I hope that we will soon be able to open safely to all of our children but this would need to be a carefully thought out plan.

You will know that the government continue to give changing guidance and we are trying to work within this guidance but this is becoming impossible given the requests for places.

To look at alternative plans that support keeping your children in good routines and socialisation, we are planning a range of summer activities. This week our Trust schools are launching a virtual sports day – the details of which will come out to you today. I hope you can encourage your child to take part. There will be many more programmes that we offer over coming weeks and I look forward to sharing these with you.

I will let you know by the Wednesday 24th June if we need to close the year one bubble. If your child is part of this bubble and you require a critical worker or vulnerable child placement, please contact me as soon as possible.

On a personal note, it has been a time in my Headship that I never thought I would experience. Effectively, we are living through a time that will be carefully marked in history. My team has worked tirelessly to try and work around the ever changing guidelines the government keep implementing – often with no notice and this has impacted on our morale. What I can tell you is that whenever we see the children we are instantly boosted. Whether it is out in the public, online or in school, we are always cheered by seeing them.

You should all be tremendously proud of yourselves for how you have managed your families and supported us in trying to stay open to as many children as possible. At the end of this crisis, when we all look back at the parts we have played, I can say without hesitation, that the Hookstone Chase families have been kind, stoic and strong in the face of adversity. What an incredible lesson to our children!

I realise that the change in bubbles as may need to happen will be challenging and we have really considered many options but due to staff illness and absence, we now have a very limited option for the next four weeks.

I will keep you updated as soon as I have any more news. Many thanks for your support and understanding in this matter.

Kind regards,

Miss Watson

