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Monday, 11 May 2020

Initial response following the Prime Minister's statement on May 10th 2020

Dear Parents or Carer,

I'm sure, like me, you will have heard the Prime Minister indicating that the Government believes it **may** be in a position to implement a phased re-opening of schools from 1st June, starting with pupils in Reception, Year 1 and Year 6. This is part of the Government's conditional plan which it says will remain under regular review. It may also be that you experienced a range of emotions in relation to this announcement – I know I did.

I want to very clear that at Wharnccliffe Side Primary School, the whole staff want to get our pupils back into school as soon as it is safe to do so. I am privileged to work with a team that is utterly dedicated to our school and we have devoted our lives and careers to the care and education of young people – we do not want to see classrooms empty for a day longer than they need to be. At the same time, **I must ensure that school is a safe place to be for children and staff alike.**

Notwithstanding the issue of our boiler, we are still awaiting more clarity on how we could logistically facilitate any potential return to school. Some more guidance has been released this afternoon but there are still many more questions than answers. I am therefore unable to update you on any concrete plans at this moment in time but rest assured, I will be taking every possible step to try and provide some answers / reassurances.

I have been in 'virtual meetings' all day and have a number of others scheduled throughout the next week or so; including with the other Headteachers in our MAT; the wider locality and across the city. On Wednesday afternoon, I will be meeting with our local MP (along with several other Heads from our area). During these meetings we will discuss common approaches which will inform our own risk assessments and attempt to mediate the some of the risks that this proposal brings.

There are many issues to be ironed out before we can begin to reopen the school; for example how we maintain social distancing with very young children – who find this incredibly difficult! Our classrooms will only physically hold small numbers of children whilst these measures remain in place – so we may need to operate some sort of 'rota' system.



Wharnccliffe Side Primary School is part of Peak Edge, which is an exempt charity and a company limited by guarantee, registered in England with company number 11650747

In the coming days I will be working on the following priorities:

- to gain a better understanding of the details of the government's plan
- to seek a clearer picture of the scientific evidence the government has based this plan on
- to listen and understand the views of colleagues, including our various professional bodies
- to get helpful and sound advice to you as I understand more.

I understand that you will want more detail as soon as possible and will have many questions and I am sorry that we aren't in a position to answer any questions at this time. This means in the short term, nothing has changed and we will remain open to the children of key workers and vulnerable children; whilst providing home learning to other pupils via our website: www.wharncliffeside.org.uk/home-learning.html. If you have any questions about your child's learning, please email their class teacher. I will provide you with further information in the coming days and weeks as soon as I am able to do so.

As part of our initial planning processes, it would be helpful if we had some indication of the demand for places should the government go ahead and order schools to open more widely after the half term break. Therefore, if you are a parent of a child in Reception, Year 1 or Year 6, please would you email me as soon as possible on headteacher@wharncliffeside.sheffield.sch.uk, stating whether you would take up the offer of a school place on June 1st should one become available?

Whatever happens, please be assured I will make decisions relating to any form of wider school opening based on what is safe and will communicate these to you as soon as I am able. Please do not worry in the meantime. We can all be certain that we have a fantastic team at Wharncliffe Side and we will find a way through this uncertainty together. Thank you again for all that you are doing and for your continued patience and support – it has really meant a lot to me over this very difficult period. Please continue to look after yourselves and remember that we are thinking about you.

Yours sincerely



Matt Gaughan

Headteacher

Reach for the stars:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qjFizMH8N6M>