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Dear Parents

15th May 2020

Following the Prime Minister's speech and subsequent Department of Education guidance around the possible re-opening of primary schools, there will understandably be a great deal of concern among parents regarding sending their children back to school. The announcement and guidance has certainly caused wide spread concern and anxiety among education leaders and all school staff. Currently, the Government's plan is to open schools to Nursery, Year 1, Reception and Year 6, as well as 'strongly advising' other children, such as those with Education Health Care Plans to attend school.

Obviously, as a Junior School, we only have Year 6 children, but the Government's guidance affects our Orchard children, as well as other children in the mainstream school. Therefore, I wanted to outline my thoughts and actions around the possible re-opening of our school:

- As always, my top priority is the safety of my pupils and staff. This obviously includes their physical safety, but hugely important at this current time is their mental health and well-being;
- I am in communication with, and taking advice from, other education leaders across Surrey, including education unions and advisors, as well as consulting the Government guidance documentation;
- Shortly, a parent survey will be distributed, initially to parents of children in Year 6, to gauge their opinions on the possible re-opening and whether they would send their children to school. Other families will be telephoned individually to discuss the situation;
- I will consult the views and opinions of school staff – their health, and the health of their families is paramount;
- Once I have more information, I will contact Year 6 and other relevant parents again outlining what we can put in place at school. Although we are still very much in the planning stage, I can confidently say that it would not be a 'normal' school day. Classes would be reduced in size, part-time attendance may have to be introduced, children may not be in their usual classroom, with their usual teachers. Also, staggered drop-offs and collection times would be essential, along with separate break and lunchtimes for each small group of children;
- I would inform parents of the safety measures that we could put in place, as well as those safety measures that just would not be consistent in a primary school.

I would also like to highlight that staff capacity will be a real issue for the school, both being with the children at school, but also preparing and monitoring the online learning that the majority of our children will be accessing. I hope you will appreciate that there are still many factors and risks to consider and address, and I will continue to keep you as updated as possible as new information becomes available.

Sending you very best wishes from all of the staff at The Hermitage.

Take care
Mrs Harrup, Head teacher

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