



## Howard Primary School

18<sup>th</sup> March 2020

Dear Parents and Carers,

### **Re: School arrangements for partial re-opening**

Firstly, the senior leadership team, governing body and staff of Howard Primary School wish to thank you for your support and understanding during the current school closure. By working together, we are sure we will be able to achieve the best possible outcomes for all our stakeholders during this challenging period.

You will no doubt have seen our letter on Monday 11<sup>th</sup> May in which we stated that we had no intention of changing the current arrangements until we had received the necessary guidance from government and had a chance to discuss the possibilities of re-opening with school leadership and governance. We have now had sight of that government guidance and a meeting has taken place between our senior leadership team and our co-chairs of governors, John Robinson and Paul Smith.

It goes without saying that the planning of such an unprecedented set of circumstances requires flexibility and adaptability. What is not negotiable for us however, is the safety of your children, our staff and our wider school community.

Following detailed discussions and careful consideration of all the practicalities, a decision has been made that initially the first week of our re-opening will be for our year 6 pupils only. However, we want to emphasise that the 1st June is the earliest that this might happen – this depends on further falls in the spread and impact of the virus, as well as discussions with national unions and associations. Nothing has been fully decided and may indeed change.

During this time, we will be carefully monitoring the school's ability to socially distance and safeguard the pupils and staff on site. Assuming that we have been able to do this successfully, we would then hope to be in a position to open the school up next to our year 1 pupils. Again, we will monitor carefully how we are able to maintain the government's social distancing requirements with these much younger pupils. After that period, our desire will then be for our reception pupils to join us.

We think it is important that we outline to you also, that whatever date the government does decide upon, we shall not bring back all of the pupils, full time, in these year groups immediately, as we need to phase even such a limited return to make sure we are providing the safest and most appropriate setting for our staff and pupils.

To be clear, please do not expect 'school as usual'. There will be a gradual and phased return which will allow us to induct pupils and staff into new systems and approaches that are designed to keep them safe as possible, and will allow staff to make sure these new systems meet the government's requirements and Public Health England's recommendations.

These requirements require Howard to introduce new ways of working which will include:

- Arrival and departure times staggered to minimise gatherings
- Class sizes limited to 15 – this will inevitably mean that pupils are unlikely to be taught by their regular teachers
- Pupils working in the same group through each day they attend and engagement between groups restricted
- Lunch and break times rearranged



Head Teacher: Jackie De Saulles (B.Ed)  
Dering Place, Croydon, CR01DT  
Telephone: - 0208 688 4216



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- Increased access to hand washing and hygiene routines.

Although classrooms and breaks will be organised to minimise physical contact, social distancing with children cannot be enforced in the same way as with adults as recognised in government guidance. We feel we need to make this clear as we would not want to mislead your understanding of the realities of social distancing of children in a school so that you can make an informed decision as to whether you wish to send your child back to school.

In the light of the government guidelines, the SLT has been working on a range of different models of a phased and gradual return for those pupils in, Reception, Year 1 and Year 6.

We wish to stress that this decision has been made to ensure as safe an environment as possible for everyone who attends our school. These are not easy decisions to make and we do not make them lightly, however as the past two months have clearly shown us, protecting our health, and the health of those in our community must be the priority.

We will be sending more detailed information to you in due course outlining our safety plans with details of how classrooms, playtimes, lunchtimes etc. will be organised to allow for maximum social distancing opportunities. There will also be changes to the way lessons are timetabled and delivered and how drop-offs and collections of children will be organised. We will provide you with all of this information as soon as possible.

In the meantime, we would like to ask for your continued patience and understanding. These plans may change over the coming weeks as we receive further guidance from government and as school leaders and governors hold further discussions and reviews of the current plans. As mentioned previously, flexibility and adaptability in how we manage this partial re-opening will be the key to its success and to the safety of your children and our staff.

Whilst school **will not be open to years 2,3,4 and 5**, children of **key workers** in these year groups will be able to continue to come into school as usual.

As part of our preparations it would be very helpful for us to know how many children are likely to return to school from firstly Year 6 and subsequently Year 1 and Reception. Please could you complete the short survey which you will receive if you have a child in Reception, Year 1 or Year 6. You are welcome to change your mind after the survey, so please be reassured that you will not be challenged on or held to account for your responses.

Yours sincerely,

Miss J De Saulles  
(Head Teacher)

Mr J Robinson & Mr P Smith  
(Co-Chairs of Governors)



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