



22<sup>nd</sup> May 2020

Dear Parents and Carers,

### **Returning to School**

This is an incredibly challenging time for everyone in our school community and I want to begin by thanking you all for your support, good wishes and for sharing your views which are helping us to plan for the reopening of Swansfield in a careful, steady and safe way for all our children, families and staff.

This is step 1 of the Swansfield Roadmap and whether we start to implement it on 1st June or later, we hope that we have drafted a series of events that will in the fullness of time bring us all back together in our wonderful school to continue on our journey of learning and friendship.

We are expecting that a government update due on 28<sup>th</sup> May will inform our reopening date and we will take children into school in a phased way on Tuesdays and Thursdays, allowing us to systematically brief staff and prepare each learning area for receiving children beforehand.

Our ongoing priority has been the education and care of our key workers' children and the vulnerable groups. These children have been in school throughout the closure as well as over the school holidays. They are based in the Studio, Hub and Maple class and work in three well established small groups which are now known by the new jargon as "bubbles".

Only children in this group will have access to wrap around care and Tic Toc will remain closed for the time being.

Since my letter last week we have been focusing on two pieces of work: a parent survey and a health and safety risk assessment in order to guide our decision making.

On Friday I sent an email to all the parents in Early Years, Year 1 and Year 6 to gauge opinion and possible uptake of the offer to come back to school. You have shared your views about the guidance, the current spread of the virus in this region, how your children have been responding to learning at home, whether they are missing their friends and routine and your family circumstances in terms of needing to get back to work or health. I appreciate your openness; it has been helpful in establishing the first step which the government has stipulated must start with our youngest children.

From your responses we have been able to make three further "bubbles" for our Early Years children: Cherry (3 children with Jenny Carr and Claire Wallwork), Apple (up to 12 children with Miss Freeman and Kerry Wallace) and a combined reception bubble of 12 children with Mrs Grimes and Mrs Hammond in Plum Class.

We hope to bring these children into school from June 2<sup>nd</sup> using staggered starting points (**Cherry and Apple on Tuesday 2<sup>nd</sup> June and Reception on Thursday 4<sup>th</sup> June**) to establish the routines of drop off and pick up, daily school activities such as outdoor play, lunch (summer menu is being shared on the website), child and adult led learning activities - all of which will be interspersed with frequent hand washing, careful movement around the building following our new one way system and lots of encouragement and support from the teaching teams of 2 adults who will work within each bubble. As the guidance states, young children cannot be expected to socially distance and all these measures have been introduced to mitigate risk. Key to all of this is reduced mixing so once established, children will work and play within their bubble. We have thoughtfully rearranged the learning environment to provide more space, soft furnishings and toys which may harbour the virus have been removed, the classrooms and remaining toys have been thoroughly cleaned and this cleaning will continue throughout each and every day.

In the second week of this plan, possibly week commencing 8th of June, we will admit **children in year 1 on Tuesday 9<sup>th</sup> June followed by those in year 6 on Thursday 11<sup>th</sup> June.**

The year 1 bubble (12 children led by Miss Langman and Mrs Crowe) will be based in Beech classroom which is slightly larger giving us space to rearrange the furniture to maximise social distancing. We are looking into the possibility of opening a new gate between Beech and Oak class to ease access for this group.

Uptake for year 6 has been greater than in other years and we are expecting to run three bubbles led by Mrs Murdy with Mrs Baxter, Miss Moffat with Mrs Sapor and Mr Rose with Mrs Amy Smith, each group will have between 9 and 11 children. Again we have reorganised and deep cleaned the classrooms and devised new routines to minimise social mixing. As we know our year 6 children are an independent bunch who I am sure can be trusted to bring themselves into school at a set time. Once briefed on the new expectations I know they will rise to their new challenges and responsibilities. The High School has been in contact with all new students and their parents and they are planning a virtual transition experience this year. We will of course liaise as usual and if possible arrange for high school staff to talk with the children though this might be through electronic means.

Many of you have chosen to continue with home education and we respect your decision and right to do so. In some ways this has assisted us in our delivery of a safe and controlled education for others in school by reducing the number of children and enabling us to organise smaller bubbles. While most staff in Early Years, Year 1 and Year 6 are working within the bubbles, we have several teachers who are vulnerable and will continue to work from home or who will be on a rota within the key worker bubble. We are assigning these teachers the task of continuing the home learning blogs though in some cases these cannot be as class specific as before. The Cherry class blog will continue to be shared each week by Claire Hornsby, Miss Whitlow will keep a home learning blog for Apple, Pear and Plum and Mrs Young will do so for Year 1.

These members of staff will be your point of contact for questions, queries and for sharing children's work. Similarly, Mr Johnson will be responsible for overseeing the home learning of those in Year 2, Mrs Michelle Smith will do so for Willow class, Mr Warburton for Chestnut and Maple. Within upper KS2, Miss Back will support home learning for Sycamore class and Mrs O'Connell will do likewise for those children not attending school in Rowan and Larch.

Once we have final confirmation of the return date, we will send 'joining instructions' for each bubble. This will include information about drop off and collection points and times, clothing, personal belongings and lunches. We will be shortening the school day slightly to allow extra time for cleaning and planning.

We would like to feel that we are getting back to somewhat of a normal existence - school uniform if it still fits would be good however we appreciate that most of the children will have grown, so we are suggesting a relaxed uniform with cool and comfortable clothes which are clean each day being most important.

Our children in years 2, 3, 4 or 5 remain just as important to us as those who have been invited back to school. As such we are currently producing new work packs which will be available for collection from school at the beginning of next half term. This will include the gift of a paperback reading book which we hope that you as a family will enjoy sharing together. We will bundle the packs into family groups and, to support social distancing, notify you by text of a time slot according to the initial of your surname. We will set up a collection point at the fire doors in the hall and we ask that you queue 2 metres apart on The Cut, entering one at a time to collect your pack.

As it is half term next week, we want all of our school community including staff, to enjoy a restful week. Let's hope that the sun shines and you can switch off from class blogs and home learning and just enjoy being together as a family. Class blogs will be up and running from Wednesday 3rd June and in the meantime we would like all the children to take part in the Swansfield in Bloom art project. Please remember that because staff will be working in different and often multiple roles, email responses might not be so immediate. However, if you have an urgent concern or query, the office will be staffed during school hours and this will be the best way to get a speedy response.

I am leaving the writing of the newsletter until the second week back when I'll be able to tell you how things have gone and hopefully be able to shed some light on step 2.

I suspect that the initial plan as outlined here is probably the easiest part of a long journey and I can foresee many complexities ahead. Please allow us to take it gradually step by step and continue to let us know how you are feeling. I know that you will always be considerate, kind and appreciative to my staff. We have all felt uplifted by the support we have received over the last few months. Thank you!

With very best wishes



Jenny Smith

Headteacher: Mrs J E Smith BSc PGCE

