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Wednesday 20th May 2020

Preparations for a phased return to school

Dear Parents and Carers,

Like many of you, we have been trying to work out what the changes outlined by the Prime Minister mean for us and for Buckton Vale in particular. We cannot wait for our school to be filled again with happy children, enjoying learning and the company of their classmates. It is clear however, that we must now go step by step and above all, plan and prepare school to ensure that we are keeping everyone safe. We have studied the guidance documents very carefully; this letter is to allow us to share our initial thinking on preparations for a phased return.

Schools are being asked to prepare for children in Nursery, Reception, Year 1 and Year 6 to begin a phased return to school, **no earlier than 1st June (8th June for Tameside schools)**. These children will be in small groups of no more than 15. At Buckton Vale we have already sent a letter to parents in these year groups requesting they let us know via survey monkey whether they intend to send their children back or not. Following this letter a further survey will be sent to parents in Reception, Year 1 and Year 6 to ask for a more definite answer as without this we will be unable to move forward with our plans. **Please can parents of these year groups ensure they respond to the survey by Thursday 21st May at 3.30pm when the survey will be closed.**

Schools will also be limited by the numbers of staff available. Staff who are shielding will not be able to return to school at the moment, and have been instructed to continue to work from home.

As children must be in small groups, **they may well not be with their own class teacher, in their usual classroom or with all of their friends**. The government guidance says that as far as possible, the children will need to remain within their group and with the same adult whilst they are in school. Where this is not possible, children will be placed in a group with a familiar adult. Breaks and lunches must be staggered so that the children do not mix with other groups. As a result, playtimes and lunchtimes will not be what children are used to.

We will carry out additional stringent cleaning everyday so that when the children leave, the spaces and resources that they have used are thoroughly cleaned to reduce the risk of the virus. This is already happening daily for our key worker children, but as the number of children in school increases, there will

be more areas and resources to clean. Additional time for cleaning will need to be factored into any arrangements for the return of more pupils; again this presents more staffing challenges.

We are instructed that all classroom items and resources that cannot be easily cleaned must be put away and not used. Activities must be limited to things that can be cleaned regularly. In early years settings this will change the classroom environment that the children are familiar with. For example, there will be no sand, water, playdough, or role play clothes. We must avoid children sharing resources where we can and if they must share, we need to be able to clean the equipment in-between uses. Children of all ages will also need to sit at single tables, well-spaced apart during their time in school.

So what does this mean for parents at Buckton Vale?

- Our existing key worker and vulnerable children must continue to be accommodated as the first priority. School will then be able to see how many additional children they can care for dependant on space and staff available.
- **This may mean that not all children in Reception, Year 1 and Year 6 will be able to return together.** We are looking carefully at this considering what provision we can safely offer. It will not be the same for all schools. What Buckton Vale can offer will depend on accommodation, staffing levels and the ability to meet health and safety requirements (such as social distancing measures).
- **In order to be able to allow as many children in the designated year groups to attend school, it is very likely that we will need to offer places on a part time basis for a certain number of sessions per week.**
- School will be very different for children returning. They need to understand that they may not be with their own teacher, in their own classroom or with their classmates. Routines and systems will be unfamiliar and more formal than usual. They will however be well cared for and welcomed by the adult who is working with them.

When the time comes for some children to return, our school and all schools in Tameside will be doing everything we can to follow the safety guidance we have been issued from the DfE, Public Health England and Tameside Local Authority to keep everyone well. Parents and carers will need to help too; we will be putting the following in place:

- You will be given staggered times to drop off and collect children so we can try to safely manage this and ensure there is minimal contact – 2m distancing between members not in your household must be adhered to. Parents and carers **must not gather** at the school gates or anywhere on the premises.
- Only **one** adult can accompany their child when dropping off/collecting.
- No adults are permitted to enter the building, including the main office area. You will be able to contact us by ringing 01457 833102 or emailing together@bucktonvale.tameside.sch.uk
- Children will be required to wear their uniform, which according to health advice **must be clean on each day.** In instances where children have outgrown uniform or shoes school requests children wear colours as close to the uniform as possible.
- For these measures to remain effective, families must continue to social distancing guidance outside of school and must not be mixing with other households. Any evidence presented on the contrary will result in your child's placement being removed.

These are challenging times for us all. Many of you will be anxious to get back to work but are worried about sending your children back to school. The Buckton Vale staffing team understand and share these concerns for their own children and families.

Buckton Vale will do everything we can to respond to the guidance given by the government but will also be ensuring that we do this safely. **If you feel the time is not right for your child to return, that is your choice. There is no compulsory education at the moment, and parents will not be fined in any way for choosing to keep their children at home for a little longer.**

This initial plan will develop over the next few weeks. Further advice will be given from multiple agencies and when we are able to share further information with you, we will. You will be aware that professional associations and unions have many concerns, and they will be working at local and national level to resolve these. At the moment, the date of June 8th **is the Tameside opening date for more children.** However, this does not automatically mean you can send your child back to school. I will be in contact again once we have our initial numbers from parents of children in Reception, Year 1 and Year 6. Should numbers be high, we will firstly offer places to Year 6 so they have an opportunity to say their goodbyes. In all cases, parents will receive a telephone call or email with a placement offer. This is to ensure we are fully prepared for children returning and it supports our plans to keep everyone safe.

This letter is to share some initial thoughts and key points regarding the guidance we have been given, so you can also have time to consider this.

We would love nothing more than to have everything back to normal and welcome your children with open arms, but we are in unprecedented times. Welcoming them back safely must be our priority and we know you would want this to be the case.

In the meantime, stay safe everyone.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "DBrown". The signature is written in a cursive style with a period at the end.

Mrs Brown

Headteacher