



19th May 2020

Dear parents/carers,

Thanks to those of you who responded to our survey, which has given me some very valuable information as we embark on the gradual reintroduction of a wider group of pupils into school. As you know, the government has asked schools to begin to make plans for a possible phased return for children in Early Years, Year 1 and Year 6 initially. This is subject to certain targets related to COVID-19 being met. Based on our initial survey, I have been able to draw up a basic plan of how we will best facilitate the safe return of those pupils, as well as continuing to maintain our provision for the children who have been attending since 23rd March. It is only fair to point out to you that these plans are based on the very low numbers (23%) that we are expecting to have in. Any increase in this will change things significantly and these plans can only remain in place temporarily, with revision being required as and when other year groups are expected to start their return. We are currently dealing with a lot of unknowns. It is also worth noting at this point, that Boris Johnson's initial address stated that he would ideally like all children back into school for a month before the summer. This would require everyone to be back by 17th June – this doesn't give me long enough to build the additional classrooms required (to have no more than 15 children in a class) and so I am ruling that out! On a serious note, there genuinely won't be time for that to happen so we will have to wait and see what further information we receive about years 2, 3, 4 and 5.

It is important that you realise that the normal curriculum is 'on hold'; children who attend school over the coming weeks will not be taught in the usual way or the usual content. We aim to closely match in-school learning with the home learning, so that the children whose parents do not feel the time is yet right for them to return, do not miss out.

There is still much uncertainty from our perspective about so many different aspects of what we are being asked to do. I have more documents of guidance than I know what to do with, and updates and changes do not make this any easier. As I work my way through producing a Recovery Plan, it is apparent that there is no 'quick fix' for any of the problems we face. Much of this is like squaring a circle – we cannot guarantee to meet all of the criteria from the guidelines because some of them are simply impossible given our available space, staffing and work patterns. However, rest assured that the safety and well-being of all pupils, staff and the wider community are at the forefront of any decision-making and we will not make any plans that would jeopardise this.

I am very aware – and most concerned – about the potential negative impact a return to school in the current climate could have on children's mental health and emotional well-being. What I am very keen to guard against is school becoming a frightening place. I do not want the children to associate school with fear – we cannot allow children to become afraid of school. I am keen to ensure that school still remains 'human' and as close to our usual 'warm' environment as we can manage. We will do as much as we can (details to follow) to reduce close contact between the children, each other and adults, but please be aware that we cannot guarantee social distancing at all times – it would be misleading to suggest

**Thorns Primary School, Thorns Road, Quarry Bank, Brierley Hill, West Midlands,
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otherwise (the government have acknowledged the impossibility of this from a practical point of view too).

Enclosed is a pack providing you with an outline of the things you need to know about your child's possible return to school (as always, if you have any further questions please do not hesitate to ask). Please read this carefully before deciding on what you want to do for your child in your circumstances. I totally understand how you feel as parents and as a school we will respect whatever decision you make. You will not be penalised or fined for non-attendance at this time. I do however need to know what your intentions are because until I have exact numbers, I cannot confirm how we intend to run. Please complete and return the online form by 3pm on Thursday 21st May (the link is in the body of the email to which this letter was attached). Don't worry if your response is now different to your initial feelings when I conducted last week's survey. I understand that you may have wanted more information before making a decision and that on that basis your views may now have changed. Because of the level of organisation required, we won't be in a position to accept children we aren't expecting who just 'turn up' at school; for this reason, we really do need a response from all of you.

As soon as I have finalised everything, I will contact you again. Once again, thank you for your patience and co-operation at this time.

Kind regards,

R.L.Jordan

Rebecca Jordan
Head Teacher

Attached documents:

- *Information Pack cover page*
- *Provision in a Nutshell*
- *Organisation of the School Day*
- *Proposed Timeline for Phased Wider Opening*
- *Photos showing what a classroom might look like*

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