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Dear Parents / Carers,

What a week! In this update there is a lot of information, but please take the time to read it through to the end, so that you are as up to date with all the relevant information as possible. Thank you.

The school's leadership team have been meticulously planning our 'Reopening Strategy' based on the guidance issued at the start of the week. Yesterday evening, just before 7:00pm, the Department for Education released another 7000-word document for schools to consider. It can be read here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/preparing-for-the-wider-opening-of-schools-from-1-june/planning-guide-for-primary-schools>

I have always made decisions on what I think is best for the Highwood community and that will not change. My plan in this email was to share with you our approach for reopening the school for the priority year groups identified by the government: EYFS, Year 1 and Year 6. This would've allowed you to indicate (through our parent surveys due out next week) whether you intend to send your children back to school knowing what provision and risk assessments are in place.

The new guidance has added further things for the school to ponder and we modified our approach slightly.

Although not completely set in stone at this point in time, I feel it right to let parents know what our general approach will be, so that when you complete the survey, you are making a much more informed decision.

Highwood's Reopening Strategy Overview

For the Priority Year Groups (EYFS, Year 1 and Year 6):

- We will create small groups that will consist of school adults and no more than 15 children. This will form a group that we will refer to as a 'bubble'. This 'bubble' will learn, play and eat together and as much as physically possible will not mix or interact with any other 'bubble' in the school.
- We will allocate each bubble a learning space and a play space where all of their activities will take place – this may not be the classroom that the children are usually in, as we need to spread out around the school as much as possible.
- We will organise a series of staggered routines. This will mean that drop off, pick up, break times and lunch times will happen at different times for each bubble. We will, of course, take into account any sibling groups and try and coordinate these as much as possible.
- We will create social distance markers around the school so that drop offs and pickups do not cause a mass gathering.

- We will create an entrance and exit system where certain gates will be designated an 'entrance' and others designated an 'exit' so that we avoid parents needing to be in close proximity to other parents.

The guidance suggests that we offer full time places for all children in priority year groups from June 1st, but I don't feel that this is the right approach for our school. Going from an average of 8 children a day to potentially 150+ children a day in one go, for me, is too quick and doesn't allow us the chance to test the risk assessment we have put in place.

My proposal is to use the first week as a way to test our new systems and processes with reduced children, to allow us to make any adjustments that are required before scaling up the number of children on site. To this end, during the week commencing June 1st our offer will likely be:

- Each class on the priority list (EYFS, Year 1 and Year 6) is split into two bubbles - A and B.
- Bubble A is in school on Monday and Tuesday
- Bubble B is in school on Thursday and Friday
- The school will use Wednesday to have a deep clean in each of the areas used and will allow staff to plan and prepare activities. The government expectation is that online learning for children that are not in school continues, so staff will use the time on Wednesday to plan these activities.

If our approach is successful, then we will look to increase the offer for week commencing June 8th to all the priority year groups being in school for 4 days, Monday to Thursday, and use Friday for our teachers planning and preparation time, as well as giving us the opportunity to do a deep clean. The reasoning behind why we would not have children on Friday is that, as an ultimate goal, we will not have any other teachers joining the bubbles that have been created. Teachers still need the time to plan and prepare the children's learning and this will allow that to take place. The deep cleaning option we are looking to go with is using a 'Germ Fogger' approach, which requires the spaces to be empty for a period of time – I think this is safest done without any people in the building.

For the Key Worker / Vulnerable Group:

Our plan is to continue to offer the same provision that is currently available. For those children who are in this group, until we go to a full week's provision, we will aim to keep them in their own Key Worker bubble rather than mixing children into their own year groups. They will have school adults allocated to them, so that the bubble remains as protected as possible. What we are trying to avoid is that bubble groups are constantly mixing and therefore there is a potential increase the risk of infection and our whole school strategy is not successful at minimising risks.

We are still working on what the day to day provision will look like and this will be communicated with you as soon as it has been finalised.

All of the aspects of this plan have been and will continue to be risk assessed. I will inform parents when the full risk assessment document is published on our school website.

In the survey that we create, we will be asking for parents to give us an initial indication about their children returning to school. We will also give parents the opportunity to ask any questions that you have and we will use these questions to create an FAQs section on our Reopening Strategy, so that you feel fully informed.

I am fully aware that the decision you make about whether your children return to school is extremely difficult. Please be reassured that the decision is entirely yours – there will be no repercussions from the school in relation to the choice you make. Whatever your decision, it will have my complete support.

Thank you for your patience and understanding in these uncertain times - it really means a great deal!

Best Wishes,

Matt Hickey

Headteacher