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Head of School Mrs S Sullivan

Friday 15 June 2020

Dear Parents and Carers,

Returning to School

We are sure you have seen the Government announcement over the weekend about schools returning from 1st June 2020. The guidance is currently suggesting Year R, Year 1 and Year 6 should begin to return to school from this date.

Apologies for the 'radio silence' since the weekend, but we are sure you can appreciate, given the current circumstances, there are some significant logistical issues that must be ironed out before this can happen.

You will also be aware of all the press coverage and the discussions that are happening at the highest level to ensure that any return to school for staff and children is safe.

We, as a school are in the very privileged position of looking after your child, leading a group of very dedicated staff and serving our wonderful community. Since becoming Headteacher at Kingsnorth in 2012, I have prided myself on my honesty and integrity. As a school we try our best to be clear and demonstrate transparency.

The guidance we have received can be viewed on the school website. We have sight of these at exactly the same time as the public does. We do not have any 'insider information' or extra detail. The plans suggested by the government include; the issues with physical distancing in schools, having less pupils in school, splitting children into groups no bigger than 15, staggering lunches, playtimes and drop off and collection etc.

Of course we want staff and children back in school. In fact we are not 'closed' – we have children in everyday, supporting key worker families but we are aware that lockdown is causing many tensions for our families and our community.

However, we cannot write to you and say we can achieve physical distancing in a school – even though we are currently trying! We can always try and make things safer, we can perhaps reduce risk, but as soon as you open the school more widely, the risk is there and will increase.

In response to this, we can categorically say there is no such thing as physical distancing in a school; it cannot exist and should not exist. The reason childhood illnesses spread so readily in a school is the fact that we are in contact and work so closely with each other – this is one of the reasons why a primary school works so well.

Given the expectations being put on schools, it does not sit comfortably with us. The Leadership team have 'met' regularly to discuss the situation. We appreciate that many in society are desperate for life to return to 'normal' and there are huge pressures to allow this. We are also being told that the 'old normal' will not be the same as the 'new normal'.

We are still waiting for a reliable test or a vaccine and there is general confusion over what to do next. We are uncomfortable in being told that things will be ok; that is not enough at present and 'ok' is not good enough when it comes to the precious gift that is your child. As much as people are struggling, we have to consider the risks and safety of all of our school.

All we can do is pass onto you all the information when we have it and you can make your own informed decision. What we can say is as much as we know there are parents who are desperate for their children to return to school, there are equally as many who do not.

We will not be 'punishing' any parent who chooses not to return their child. We believe that in the current circumstance, it is inevitable that parents are cautious and if they do not need to send their child back, they won't. We will not fine or penalise parents for choosing this decision and no child's place is at risk if they do not return yet.

As and when we have more details we will of course share them with you.

We are only interested in serving you, our community and our families. As I have said before, please take care, look after yourselves and stay safe.

With our kindest regards,
The Leadership Team and Governors