Monday 25th May 2020

Dear Parent / Carer

**Information relating to COVID-19 and school reopening**

I hope this letter finds you safe and well. It has been a challenging few weeks for everyone but I feel proud to say that the Bentley community has represented itself admirably and adhered to guidance regarding keeping safe.

Since the PMs announcement regarding the plan to begin to reopen schools from the 1st June, there have been many concerns, lots of discussions and meetings, and the involvement of a range of agencies in an attempt to answer the most important question of all: ***is it safe to send more children back into school?***

This question has been my only focus and I have spent much time listening to advice, reading DfE and Government documents, considering the SAGE report, seeking the thoughts of our families and carers, and taking direction from the LA and from Public Health. I will continue to do so.

We have formulated a robust and thorough plan to reopen school which has been risk assessed and will be able to implement this ***when the time is right and it is safe to do so.*** We do not believe that the time for reopening is now and feel that the Governments advice to reopen from the 1st June cannot be put into practise without some Doncaster-specific information and data so that we are able to make a sound decision based on *our* town and not a broad, national plan. The letter from the Mayor last week echo’s these sentiments and I would consider it reckless to open school against the recommendation of your elected Mayor who has made the decision based upon sound and accurate information and advice.

However, I am acutely aware that some of you may need to return to work and this must be considered. If you are a key worker and have, so far, not applied for childcare but now wish to do so then please contact the school for an application form and, once you have shared the relevant evidence of employment with us, we will do our best to accommodate your child(ren).

Once it is deemed safe to do so and we agree an opening date for the school, I would like you to be aware of the current plan. I emphasise the word ‘current’ as the situation appears to be changing so quickly (42 Government updates in 2 weeks!!!) that we may need to respond and amend plans accordingly. ***If changes are needed then I will make them in order to keep everyone as safe as possible.***

When/If we do reopen, the key points for you to be aware of are:

* We are likely to begin to invite the Year 6 children before our youngest children as these pupils are better able to socially distance and we can learn from them
* All families that qualify will be contacted directly. YOU MUST NOT JUST ARRIVE AT SCHOOL AT ANY POINT WITHOUT CHECKING FIRST OR BEING INVITED DIRECTLY
* Your child may not be in his/her usual classroom, with their usual friends or with their usual teacher – I have to make multiple groups and have limited staff and space
* Children in the Early Years are not going to be able to socially distance and so will be in very small groups with one key adult only
* Older children will be with two key adults only
* The National Curriculum will not be followed but a basic-skills, topic-led curriculum
* The day will be staggered so that different children arrive & leave at different times and have breaktimes and lunchtimes at different times – to reduce congestion and cross contamination
* No pupils in the focus year groups will be offered full time places – we will offer a two-day place maximum (less for early years): Monday & Tuesday OR Thursday and Friday.
* School will be closed to focus year groups on a Wednesday for cleaning, risk assessment and review
* School dinners will be provided but the choice is likely to be limited
* School uniform will not need to be worn but clean clothes will need to be worn daily

We will do our absolute best to make the school day as enjoyable as possible, we will put in every effort to make children feel welcome and will make the building as safe as we can. There are no guarantees as to how the return to school will impact the community’s infection rates.

You have a very difficult decision to make as a parent and I would like to remind you that ***parents choosing not to send their child will not be fined.*** We will continue to support with home-learning packs, advice and guidance.

Staff at home - stay safe

Mrs K McKechnie

Headteacher

Bentley New Village School