



NANSTALLON SCHOOL

AD VITAM PARAMUS

18 May 2020

Dear Parents and Carers,

Proposed phased reopening of schools

This time last week, I wrote to you following the initial announcement about the proposed phased reopening made by the Prime Minister on 10 May 2020. I intend to be fully transparent with you as to how we are planning to expand numbers returning, given the gravity of the current pandemic and ask that you consider the detail of this letter accordingly.

From the week commencing 1 June 2020 at the earliest, the government is asking primary schools to welcome back children in Nursery, Reception, year 1 and year 6, alongside priority groups.

Despite the conditionality of these proposals, there are very significant concerns about the government's plan. These proposals, as they currently stand, are likely to prove extremely challenging at Nanstallon School due to space, staffing ratios and shared facilities. In addition to this there is – as yet – no solid scientific studies/evidence that demonstrate that children, staff and families will be safe. Statistical evidence globally paints its own picture. Although in the South West, the infection rate is much lower and slower it could change with the recent lifting of restrictions and increase of social contact.

Despite the very significant concerns and the conditionality of the government's proposal, we are beginning to consider what a phased return might look like at our school.

There is a difference between planning for a return and implementing a return.

As headteacher, my responsibility is to protect and support children and staff and balance that with the welfare and health of the community. The principles of planning are as follows:

- Any phased return has to be managed with extreme caution and care so that all necessary protective measures can be put in place. This may mean it becomes necessary to take a more gradual approach than the government has indicated;
- We know the unique circumstances of our school best e.g. layout, staffing availability, class sizes, number of key workers in the community etc. This means that we are best placed to make the detailed decisions required when it comes to the safety of our school;
- We recognise that the response to covid-19 is highly likely to be a long-term one. Any vaccine could take at least 18 months to develop and there is no absolute guarantee one can be developed. We, therefore, recognise that some form of return to school for pupils and staff cannot realistically be put off indefinitely until a vaccine is discovered;

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- A gradual and phased return to schools would appear to be the most sensible approach to gradually adapt to the new ways of working that will be inevitable if schools are to return before a vaccine or effective treatments have been identified.

In consultation with the governing board, we remain responsible for evaluating whether and how it might be safe to expand the number of pupils attending. We therefore asked you as parents whether you would send your child back to school and I am grateful for the very swift response you all made on Thursday and Friday last week to the survey we sent out. ** There were slightly more respondents per cohort than pupils per cohort; therefore, the data is not fully accurate.*

*20% of YR parents said they would send their child back to school on or after 1 June 2020 (3 children)

*25% of Y1 parents said they would send their child back to school on or after 1 June 2020 (4 children)

*67% of Y6 parents said they would send their child back to school on or after 1 June 2020 (10 children)

*Therefore, collectively these priority year groups (YR, 1 & 6) represent a 37% confidence level

*Overall, 79% parents told us that they would prefer and have greater confidence in a phased return/induction in September 2020.

Whether schools open on 1 June will depend on the most up-to-date assessment of the risk posed by the virus. The five tests set out by the government must justify changes, and they must be warranted by the current alert level. The government will not make a final decision about whether it believes it is safe for schools to open further from the 1 June until 28 May.

The governing board meets on Thursday 21 May to consider our plans, challenges, risk assessments and health and safety checks. I want to reiterate that pupil and staff safety will remain the primary concern at the heart of all discussions and decisions we reach. I will write to you on Friday 22 May with further information following the meeting.

Thank you for your patience and steadfastness in these challenging times.

Warmest regards,



Ben Stephenson
Headteacher