

**STANLEY BURNSIDE PRIMARY SCHOOL,  
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**HEAD TEACHER – Mrs L. Armstrong B.Sc (Hons)**

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Thursday 14<sup>th</sup> May 2020

Dear Parents and Carers,

I hope that you are all continuing to stay safe and well during these unprecedented times. This letter has been extremely difficult to write to you all and I know that it contains lots of information. This is because our children are precious and it is important that parents and carers are kept informed as we progress through the latest Government announcement.

Following the announcement on Sunday by the Prime Minister to begin phasing Nursery, Reception, Year 1 and Year 6 in school, we have been working closely with the Local Authority in order to begin formulating a plan. Whilst I know that you will all be eager to find out what this plan will be for our own school, it is imperative that adequate time is spent considering guidelines and information from the Government, Local Authority and also teaching unions; however, I'd like to be clear that the health and safety of our pupils, staff and the wider school community will remain my absolute priority.

The Prime Minister has regularly referred to the five tests. He has conceded that currently the Government are not fully meeting these 5 tests and that re-opening schools is conditional upon this changing. It is also important to note that unions representing all staff are concerned by the proposed return and have raised these concerns with the Government several times, both before the Prime Minister's announcement on Sunday and since then. The unions are understandably keen to ensure that conditions are safe for staff as well as pupils. If the Government do not find agreement with the unions, then this will also affect the proposed return.

The decision to send your child back to school after Monday 1<sup>st</sup> June is optional. There will be no pressure on any parent or carer to send their child to school because they fall into the Government's chosen age group. It is important that parents and carers consider all of the information before making a choice for their child.

It is important that we remember that social distancing will be difficult for the vast majority of children we welcome in to school. The reason why childhood illnesses spread so quickly is because children are in close contact with one another. Children will not deliberately disobey social distancing guidelines, but instead are drawn to one another and this is part of being a child. Adults can encourage this distancing and protect their own safety in these circumstances, however it would be wrong to promise that social distancing guidelines will be followed rigidly by all children and staff at all times as this simply is not possible.

Whilst I am not in a position to share the final plan for phased reopening with you at this stage or confirm whether the reopening will happen on Monday 1<sup>st</sup> June, I can tell you all that

when school does open it will be a completely different environment to what your children are used to. Classes will be smaller and your children may not be taught by their usual class teacher, they may not be situated in their normal classroom or placed in a group with their closest friends. The children will not be attending school every day and the school start and end times will be amended in order to stagger access to school and ensure the safety of our whole school community. The way in which school staff interact with children, parents and carers and organise the school day will also be very different and against the usual ethos of our kind and caring school of which we are very proud. We anticipate that this will be extremely challenging, especially for our younger children, and every effort will be made to ensure that the changes are managed in our usual calm, caring way with the ultimate goal of making sure our children feel safe and secure whilst they are with us.

Some of the changes to ensure the safety of our whole school community will include:

- It will not be possible for staff to assist parents in coaxing their children in to school
- Children will not be permitted to dine close to their friends
- Staff will avoid close physical contact and will adhere to social distancing guidelines as far as is practically possible
- Parents will not be permitted to access the school building **for any reason**
- Resources in classrooms limited in line with new government guidelines
- Playing with friends will only be possible whilst socially distancing

I said at the beginning of lock down that I could not wait until the time that we throw the doors open to our lovely, smiling Burnside Children; this is still true but this is not the time to return to normality and it simply is not safe to do so. The staff and I cannot wait for the day that our children and the wider school community are given the opportunity to regain some normality; however, my priority will always be to protect the physical and emotional health of our whole school community.

Despite not being clear at this point what the plan will be and how the children will be phased back to school, it would be extremely useful to obtain an idea of which of our families intend for their children to attend school from Monday 1st June if the opportunity arises. I would be extremely grateful if parents and carers in Nursery, Reception, Year 1 and Year 6 could click on the link below and respond no later than Monday 18th May.

<https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/KYP35ZT>

Thank you for your continued support,

Mrs Charlton  
Acting Head Teacher