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Dear Parents/Carers,

We hope that you are all as safe and well, as you possibly can be, during these un-precedented and challenging times. We are very much missing all of our children and their families; school has been a very different place without you all and the hustle and bustle of "normal" everyday school life.

As you will be aware, the Prime Minister announced on 10th May 2020, the potential phased return to school, initially of Reception, Year 1 and Year 6 pupils, from 1st June. This being dependent on the Government meeting their "5 Tests" which are:

- ✚ To protect the NHS' ability to cope and confident in providing sufficient critical care and specialist treatment, across the UK
- ✚ To see a sustained and consistent fall in daily death rate from Coronavirus with confidence the UK is beyond the peak
- ✚ Reliable data from Sage shows the infection rate is decreasing to manageable levels across the board
- ✚ To be confident in the range of operational challenges including testing capacity and personal protective equipment (PPE) are in hand and able to meet future demand
- ✚ To be confident that any adjustments to the current measures will not risk a second peak of infections that overwhelm the NHS

The Government's ambition is then to have all year groups return to school, following a review of the initial phase, before the end of term and the summer holidays. We await confirmation from the Government on 28th May to confirm whether the "5 Tests" have been met in order to lessen the measures of lockdown and begin to return children to school.

We have been receiving National guidance from the Government and the Local Authority, as well as finding out about other local Cheltenham school's arrangements and more specifically focussing on our own school circumstances. This guidance came out last week with updates and more guidance has followed this week.

The School Staff and Governors are working, at pace, to ensure that we put into place risk assessments, social distancing measures and guidelines to eliminate as much risk as possible, in the current climate. You must be aware that whilst we do this work, taking into consideration Government guidance and risk assessments, this may lower the risk but we cannot guarantee that pupils and staff will not transmit the virus. We continue to source and implement signage, personal protective equipment and adapt the working environment. Once fully agreed by Governors, risk assessments will be available on the school website.

A plan has been designed to return as many pupils to school, as possible over-time, and dependent on regular reviews of our school situation and circumstances. However, if we follow the Government guidance to keep to groups of 15 pupils, this will not allow enough space for 2 metre social distancing, which may need to be reviewed and our plan re-assessed. We do have some limited staffing, as per the Government guidance for "shielding" and personal circumstances but where possible we have tried to keep groups with their teacher, teaching assistant or a phase member of staff. We consider positive working relationships and nurture to be key for our pupils and they will need the best support, from staff they know, to settle them back into school and address any worries they may have.

Once the children return to school, they will remain in these groups known as "bubbles" to ensure that the potential risk of the Covid19 virus is limited to small groups. If a child is unwell and sent home with possible symptoms of Coronavirus, they will be asked to have a test and if the results are positive, the "bubble" group will self-isolate as per the guidance. We will expect everyone to get a test before they

return to school. This will be part of the "Track and Trace" system that the Government is putting into place. Again, we can take no responsibility for the accuracy of test results but will require written evidence of the outcome.

Some Parents/Carers have already made their personal choice not to send their child back to school and these parents will not be prosecuted. School will not be held to account for attendance, during this time.

Teachers are preparing work-packs for children who will not be attending school, and these will be available for all pupils. We appreciate that it has been difficult for some to access the Home Learning page on the school website, due to limited technology or larger families having to share one smartphone or one computer. Not every home has a printer and during lockdown, it has been very difficult to get resources. With school being officially closed, and not wanting to put anyone at risk, we were not able to swap books due to possible transmission of the virus, or collect work and renew work-packs. Following valuable, parental feedback, we are putting together packs to cover the term.

I will be writing to explain in detail how the new arrangements will work. This will not be school as usual. We will continue the protocols of cleaning, hand washing and social distancing, as much as is possible, with youngsters who can often struggle to understand the concept. The routines and risk assessment will mean staggered toileting and lunchtimes. We need you to know that we will not be able to negotiate on friendship groups and children who do not comply with social distancing will be asked to go home, as per the Government guidance.

We will operate staggered drop-offs and pick up times for the "bubble" groups, as the expectation of social distancing will also be for parents/carers, who will have to follow the social distancing measures. We do not want any of our school community put at further risk, by others not respecting or following the practice. We need your help and support to make this happen effectively.

Our main priority at Hester's Way Primary School is the health, safety and well-being of our pupils, families, staff and governors. As well as planning for re-opening, we have been assessing our property actions in school. Due to the Covid19 lockdown, we have not been able to invite contractors onto site, some maintenance is required and we are trying to ensure that this takes place as soon as possible, with a view to opening on 1st June. However, we must follow protocol and contractors will need to order parts and this could potentially postpone or delay the timescales to re-open.

We would like to reassure you that whilst we have remained open to Key Worker and Vulnerable families, the areas used have been safe. We just need to action jobs that had been previously been put on hold.

Throughout the Covid19 crisis, including over the Easter holidays, we have remained open for Keyworker and Vulnerable pupil groups, as the Government requested. This will continue throughout the next term. As Key Workers, the teaching staff have made an invaluable contribution in ensuring the care and safety of this group of children, whilst enabling their parents to carry out their essential duties. They have put themselves above and beyond, often risking their own personal safety, as well as that of their own families. For this, we are all extremely grateful and acknowledge the personal sacrifices that they have all made throughout this crisis.

We would also like to say a huge thank you to all of our Key Worker parents/carers, for all of their commitment and hard work towards caring, treating and preventing the spread of the Coronavirus. They too have had to selflessly put themselves and their families at potential risk and isolated from other family members.

When we return to school, we will be-able to find out the true extent to how Covid19 has affected our pupils, families and school community. If any families have lost loved ones to this virus, we share our deepest condolences. We plan to support pupils' well-being as a priority and can, as always, signpost families to support, where needed. Questionnaires will be sent out to help us identify any pupils and families in need. Please call school or email using the addresses on the school website, as always, if you currently need help and support.

Locally and Nationally, there has been a rise in unemployment. Our Free School Meals numbers have risen from 117 to 127, now being 70% of the school. Times are hard for many. Sometimes it may not be the virus that is the risk but the circumstance people find themselves in.

The curriculum will not be as we had planned. Work will be based on gaps in children's learning, more independent tasks, with a priority in PSHE and Thrive. Wherever, we can we will try to access outdoor learning, with spatial awareness for social distancing measures, as we are fortunate to have quite extensive grounds and our Forest School.

So, our plan is to potentially open from 1st June, for Reception, Year 1 and Year 6, depending on:

- The Government's announcement on 28th June that they have met the "5 Steps"
- That essential maintenance work can be carried out in time
- That PPE and resources needed as safety measures can be sourced and adequate risk assessment measures put into place
- Staffing levels remain adequate

If we have to delay our re-opening, we will keep you updated, widening the intake of children as and when we can and as it is safe to do so. Children will return on a part-time timetable to ensure that we can eventually fit everyone safely into school but this is also dependent on the Government's confirmation of their proposals against the "5 Tests". We will also have to regularly review the school's situation, similarly to the Government guidance that is sent out almost daily and regularly updated, during these unprecedented times, this is an ever-changing situation. Every school's circumstances will be different at this time.

We appreciate your continued support and patience, during this challenging time. We are incredibly grateful for the positive comments that have kept us going. We are very much looking forward to the wider school community coming together again, when our lives become more "normal".

Parents will be contacted, if their pupil has an underlying health condition known to us, we would also ask that if you know that your child is vulnerable, especially extremely critically vulnerable, they must continue to "shield" as we cannot guarantee the social distancing measures needed to protect them. We will require GPs to make the final decision on whether the child should be in school at this time. If you know that your child has an underlying health condition please be mindful that you may not have shared this information with us and you must contact the office by phone or email to update our records.

We must also remind you that if you have any vulnerable or "shielding" family members, you must continue to follow the Government guidance to do so and therefore if you send your child to school, at this time, you could potentially put others at risk.

If you are a Key- Worker and will require a school place from 1st June, we will need you to contact admin@hestersway.gloucs.sch.uk immediately to fill in a form, as you will have priority of placement, at the moment.

Communications will go out to the relevant classes with information about plans, procedures and expectations with key information.

Governors have met to discuss our school circumstances and ability to re-open. Plans and risk assessments will be sent out, after being fully approved by Governors, at the start of next week, and parents can make their decisions up until Friday 29th May.

Kind regards,

Kirsti Ashman
(Head Teacher)

