

11.05.20

Dear Parents and Carers,

I hope you are all well and that you are all coping in this very worrying time; the challenges that we are all facing are significant and we can only hope that by doing our bit we are helping to ensure that a safer future is a little nearer.

Following recent weeks of speculation regarding schools, we heard an announcement from the Prime Minister yesterday during which he set out a possible plan for the phased reopening of schools.

“If we as a nation begin to fulfil the conditions I have set out, then in the next few weeks and months, we may be able to go further. In step two, at the earliest by June 1st after half term, we believe we *may* be in a position to get primary pupils back into schools, in stages, beginning with Reception, Year 1 and Year 6. Our ambition is that secondary pupils facing exams next year will get at least some time with their teachers before the holidays.”

The Leadership Team and I have consulted widely with colleagues across Kent in both mainstream and special school settings. We have sought advice and assurances from KCC regarding the challenge’s special schools face with the possible wider opening of school settings over the next few months. There has been no specific special school guidance yet, about this wider opening, which takes into account the very specific needs of our students.

As yet, we have not been able to obtain answers about the availability or use of PPE or any guidance about how we can safely transport students into school whilst maintaining social distancing; we hope that over the coming days and weeks further information and clear guidance can be given.

I would like to assure you that, at Goldwyn, we will continue to keep the safety and welfare of our students, their families and our staff at the heart of any decision making. When we are informed of any specific dates and it is safe to do so, we will respond with appropriate measures in place, to the government’s call to open our school more widely. We will use the considerable knowledge we have about our students and their needs to put together a plan of action which keeps students and staff as safe as possible.

In order to maintain a safe school, which protects everyone within the school community, it is important that the key implications of any potential increase in student numbers are understood by all staff, students and parents.

1. We recognise that school cannot operate in the way it did prior to COVID-19. Student groupings, timetables, and the range of subjects taught will all look different in this new phase.

2. Many students are likely to find these changes create increased anxiety as the usual routines will have changed. We will need to have the appropriate resources to help students with their anxieties.
3. The practicalities of implementing social distancing measures will mean the numbers of students we have in each class will have to be reduced, movement around the school and contact with other students and staff will be minimised and the majority of lessons will be taught in one room.
4. Due to the far fewer number of staff available to come into school and the size of our classrooms we are likely to be operating at the Great Chart site only.
5. Every member of the school community (staff, parents and students) has a responsibility to conduct themselves in a way which minimises any health risk to others

When the time comes, in order to safely reintroduce more students back into school, we will need to look at their individual risk assessments, their ability to follow instructions and social distancing rules in school and any risk they may pose to others due to their anxiety or impulsivity.

We will work with parents to agree what is safest for each student. For some, remaining at home will be the safest option; for a very small number of students some additional support will be made available.

If parents prefer to keep their children at home we will continue to provide educational and emotional support in the way we are currently.

We remain committed to supporting all our students through this extremely challenging time. The range of home learning resources, designed by staff, have provided stimulating and engaging work in all subjects. New national programmes have been developed online, such as BBC Bitesize and the Oak Academy (see links on our website, many parents having reported that their children are enjoying these too.

We will be following the recommendations and guidance being issued and keep you informed of the next steps for Goldwyn when we have more answers and greater clarity.

Best wishes,

Charlotte Lewis