

Willow Brook Contact

18th May 2020

head@willowbrook.notts.sch.uk



Dear Willow Brook families,

This is my 9th Monday morning newsletter since lockdown. It seems so long since we shared our days... Your contact, through email, letter, cake delivery or phone call, however small, makes a quiet school just that little bit brighter! Thank you most sincerely for your thoughts and community spirit.

Moving towards re-opening

I have been in contact with the parents whose children will be part of the first phase of re-opening schools next month and will continue to keep you all informed of on-going developments. Schools have little or no prior knowledge of proposals before they hit the national daily briefings, so, often, you are as up to date as we are!

There is no doubt that even welcoming 3 of our 7 classes safely back into the building whilst ensuring that we do our utmost to deliver meaningful lessons to both home and school-based pupils will be a giant undertaking. Whatever the challenge, we aim to be positive and proactive and do our best to embrace the needs and views of our collective community. Lessons in the key curriculum subjects will be delivered in school and pupils working from home will also receive a simple timetable to help them to structure the learning week if this is manageable.

Should the first phase of reopening primary schools go ahead and prove to be successful, you will know that the government intend to extend the provision to include all year groups in July. We know that school will not be the routine that children will be familiar with and that this may unsettle many. Many members of staff are just as unsure, and I don't think a single one of us will approach June 1st without some level of anxiety. For some children (and adults), learning to deal with change can help them to develop resilience and they learn quickly and adapt – often with more success than we give them credit for; others need a longer more supported strategy. I have sought the views of all parents in Year R, 1 and 6 and am encouraged by your positivity and faith in moving forward. I also respect those who cannot (for family/personal medical reasons) commit to returning to a social settling or feel that this is too early to lose the protection of family isolation.

For those who will be preparing to come back, we ask for your patience and understanding. We are not permitted to agree to you selecting days, nor can we organise groups based on your individual preferences. We will do our best to listen but will make class bubbles, groups, space and available teachers work together for

the good of the 'whole'. It will have to work like clockwork, but there's no reason for that to mean that it will be an unhappy or overly distressing situation.

We expect further clarity from the Department of Education on Wednesday. There are, however, several points that I wish to make clear from this early stage should the school be in a position to open.

As I have already indicated, during this return phase school will not be able to offer before and after school care. This mixing of children between groups will not comply with our need to maintain fixed 'bubbles' at all times.

School start and end times will be staggered to between 8.45am and 9.15 to make sure that social distancing at this busy time is upheld, and it will be expected that one adult brings their child to school. Similarly, at the end of the day, children will leave at a set time between 3pm and 3.30. It is important that these times are adhered to so that pupils feel secure and are not left waiting. It is possible that we will close school early on Friday to allow teachers to plan the week ahead and for the building to be deep cleaned.

We will continue to support the children of keyworker parents and vulnerable families as and when you are unable to support them at home. As has been the pattern over the past 8 weeks, times and days for these pupils can be negotiated according to shifts.

Our planned inset training day will not take place on June 1st, however, to enable forward planning for September to take place, our planned inset day on Friday 3rd July will go ahead unless other circumstances take precedence.

Next week

Whilst you may have lost track of time, next week is half term... a bit of a 'bus man's holiday' for us all! Home schooling will take a break as staff work to prepare for the following week. I'm sure you'll appreciate a break from Parentmail too! Although we will only be in school to support NHS keyworkers, if you need to contact school, please do so through head@willowbrook.notts.uk. We will be in touch with the classes returning to school with any essential information and reassurance.

I hope you continue to use the school website to find learning resources, collective assemblies and to explore any contact in the class pages from staff.

If there are any questions on the above, I will answer to the best of my current knowledge. Rest assured that I will send information to you as soon as it is known.

Apologies for the formal tone to my letter this week. I am trying to keep you as informed as possible and that may sometimes need more concise sentences to fit everything in!

For now, I wish you a safe week ahead and send sincere regards to you all,

Louise Ballard