



Head Teacher: Louise Ballard B.Ed. (Hons) NPQH  
Willow Brook, Keyworth, Nottingham, NG12 5BB  
Tel (0115) 9149889  
[office@willowbrook.notts.sch.uk](mailto:office@willowbrook.notts.sch.uk)

Dear Parents, Carers and Willow Brook family members,

Wherever you are on this Monday morning, I hope that you are all well and that the routine of a working week feels settled and purposeful. This is the 13<sup>th</sup> week since schools first closed – it feels like an eternity. Whilst the 7 'bubble' classes who are currently working on site have been incredible in their maturity and positivity, the heart of Willow Brook is certainly missing. You will see that I have attached a communication from Councillor Colin Pettigrew, our corporate director at Nottinghamshire County Council at the end of this newsletter. He summarises quite succinctly the process that has brought us to this point and how the focus now turns to obtaining a positive outcome for all children to return safely to school in some capacity in September. In working hard to be ready for June 1<sup>st</sup>, staff and governors were determined to do all that they could to get our children back into education as soon as we could. We will continue to work to that end for **all** our pupils.

### Bubble Capacity

Our space in school for Reception, Year 6 and for our key worker group is now at full capacity. The space in Reception classrooms is limited and all staff are employed in the building. We would struggle to add any more from today. Our limit of 15 pupils has been reached in the key worker group as more parents consider returning to work. Many families who have registered for this provision have selected the days that care is required to cover essential shifts. Could I politely ask that if you are taking advantage of this class that you do so only when there is no possibility of you working from home. This may allow us to admit other children to the group and help more families who share this status. We appreciate your understanding and thought.

### Our teachers

As some of you may know, Miss Harris has had a difficult couple of months. After both of her parents succumbed to the covid virus, we were all distraught to hear that her wonderful father passed away in late April. The fact that Miss Harris was able to return to work so soon and show such fortitude, positivity and dedication to the school is testament to her professionalism and love for the children she teaches. As she moves forward, she has decided to go and live with family (and her husband to be) in Denmark. I know how hard this decision has been for her and to lose a young teacher with such skill and promise is upsetting. Not so long ago, Miss Harris told me that she'd like to stay at Willow Brook until she became its headteacher... let's see what unfolds.

Miss Weston returned in April after her year's maternity leave with the news that she was expecting her second child! Once I'd recovered, I went on to appreciate her zest for life as she took up her role job sharing virtually with Mrs Sampson in Reception. She has been pivotal in preparing and uploading home learning whilst she is part of a covid vulnerable group, but I know that her time back with us will be productive, if not short! Miss Johnston is also looking forward to re-joining the staff in October and I know the staff are looking forward to having her back! She will be back in school in September for visit days and to reacclimatise to her new class. Mrs Mullen has done (and will continue to do) a magnificent job in her role during the maternity cover until that point. Miss Hayes, too, has been a super addition to the team in her temporary maternity cover role. I know that she is missing her global adventures!

I am sure that you will appreciate that, as we work towards the autumn term, many plans will start to come together. As soon as government gives us clarity about September – whether we will be in bubbles, classes, rotas or normality - we will be in a position to share our new plans and staffing structure.

For your diary - The school still plans to go ahead with our **INSET day on Friday July 3<sup>rd</sup>**. It is important for staff to have the time to plan, prepare and work together as we complete one academic year and prepare for the next.

### Keep an eye out...

Since the government announcement that it would be difficult for all primary year groups to return before the end of term, I have been working on some ideas that might get more classes involved in whole school activities and social interaction that fit within the social distancing parameters. At our staff briefing today, I hope to share some ideas and start to work out how we might involve year groups not in school *and* those who live outside of Keyworth, who might enjoy contact with their classmates. It is good that circumstances are allowing children to share time within family meetings, but we appreciate that little people need company and play just as much as grown-ups do. In the meantime, please feel free (if you feel able) to drop by school. We will make you welcome and enjoy your company and conversation! We try to keep in touch with families as best we can but realise that days can rush by in our busyness. Be proactive! Visit us if you feel you can. Mr Jones and I will happily share a conversation... and no one has spoken to Mrs Roper since March... I'm sure she'd love a chat!

Finally, I would like to thank you for the work you have sent me from Creative Fridays! I've had videos of singing (amazing!), works of art, Desert Island Disc radio shows, Through Leaves poems, cat pictures, an invitation to a favourite restaurant and many self-portraits! If you haven't yet found yourself on the Bench of Glory, I might not have seen your work... copy me into your emails. Make this week YOUR week.

And whatever your week holds, may it be a positive one. We are, as always, thinking of you all.

With very kind regards,

Louise Ballard

This matter is being dealt with by:  
**Colin Pettigrew**  
Reference: CP/DL  
**T 0115 9773639**  
**E** cfcs.director@nottscs.gov.uk  
**W** [nottinghamshire.gov.uk](http://nottinghamshire.gov.uk)



Dear Parents/Carers

12 June 2020

I am writing to update you on Nottinghamshire schools. Our schools have remained open to vulnerable children and those of key workers since March 23<sup>rd</sup>. Staff have worked through holiday periods, including Bank Holidays.

Our primary schools were asked to undertake risk assessments to decide when and how they could start to phase a reopening for pupils in Year R, Year 1 and Year 6. Special schools were also asked to undertake risk assessments to decide how they could phase the return of more pupils. This planning has been thorough, and each school plan will be different because the building design and number of staff available impact significantly on what can be safely offered. I would like to offer my heartfelt thanks to all school staff for their dedication and hard work at this difficult time and to parents for their patience and understanding. Many pupils have, and are continuing, to learn at home. I am aware your schools have been providing work and/or sign posting you to resources and websites that you can access to help your children to continue to learn. I have received many positive anecdotes from parents and colleagues about the successful and innovative learning opportunities that parents have been creating across the county and I would like to thank you for your continued support and understanding. Teaching can be difficult but can also be rewarding. I am sure that this is a time that both you, and your children will never forget.

On Tuesday 9th June, Gavin Williamson, the Secretary of State for Education said a "cautious phased return" was the "most sensible approach to take" for schools across England. He also confirmed that, contrary to previous hopes, the government would not be able to welcome all primary children back to school before the summer.

Schools across Nottinghamshire have increased the number of pupils attending since 1st June. These pupils are being taught in small groups, referred to as bubbles by many schools. Children in school may not be with their usual class mates or teachers, in some cases they may be accessing school part time. Your child may now be attending school or learning at home or a mixture of both.

I recognise that these differences may seem frustrating, or confusing for you and for your children, but I would like to reassure you that the decisions that Headteachers are making are carefully risk assessed and are prioritising the safety and well-being of your children. The size of your child's school building and availability of staff will inevitably determine exactly how many children can return to school and in some cases, our schools simply have been unable to accept every child whose family wishes them to return to school. The government guidance is clear that vulnerable children and those of critical workers should be offered places ahead of the target years (Year R, Year 1 & Year 6) and we have seen an increase in the demand for places from critical workers. I have assured school leaders that they have my full support and deepest respect as they welcome more children back to school.

I will write to you again as soon as we have clearer information from the government about the expectations for September.

Yours faithfully  
**COLIN PETTIGREW**  
Corporate Director  
Children, Young People and Schools