

25 May 2020

Dear Parents/ Carers,

### **RE: Re-opening of Schools**

I hope you all continue to be safe and well. I know people are finding things tough at the moment and I do appreciate how everyone must be feeling. We are thinking of you all and your children and families.

As you are aware, information we receive is changing week by week as we move through the Covid-19 response. I want to be very open and honest with you in this letter and assure you that the safety of your children and the staff at Richard Cobden School is driving every decision that we make.

I am sure that you are aware that the Government is asking schools to reopen to specific year groups (EYFS, Year 1 and Year 6) no earlier than 1st June. We have received guidance from the Government on how many pupils can be in each classroom and how logistically it might be able to work regarding playtimes, lunchtimes, movement around the school, use of equipment, drop off and collection and, most importantly, minimising contact – this is the term used instead of social distancing. The staff will continue to set online work for those pupils not attending school and make regular phone calls home. It is likely that start days for different year groups will be staggered. For example, we may ask Year 6 only to return first for a few days before allowing Year 1 or Reception to return. This phased approach will allow us to carefully assess and manage the procedures and systems in place before accepting more children. After careful consideration, we have decided not to open for Nursery pupils at this time.

We are continuing to risk assess the situation, review procedures and order the necessary equipment to ensure the Government guidance can be followed within the context of our school. This is proving to be a lengthy process as the guidance is frequently updated and subsequently, our plans need to be adapted in line with the updates.

I need you to understand that the way school operates from June 2020 will be very different to the school your child left in March. To implement the guidelines, we need to operate in a different way.

I cannot and will not guarantee that your child will not come into contact with other children and adults. We will teach children how to keep safe at school, including avoiding touching or being too close to others. However, we will do our utmost to do this in a way that does not cause them to become more anxious. The equipment they use will be limited and there will be changes to the use of classrooms, the halls and playgrounds to minimise contact. Your child may come into contact with other children despite there being measures in place to limit this.

Drop off and collection of children will be very different as there will be staggered times for this to happen. These will need to be strictly adhered to. There will be systems in place when dropping off and collecting children and parents may have to queue, adhering to social

distancing with other parents in the queue. There will be a one-way system into school with all parents asked to enter and exit through different gates. If your child is coming into school, you will receive further information about this. If you need to speak to a member of staff you will need to telephone the office or email [admin@rcobden.camden.sch.uk](mailto:admin@rcobden.camden.sch.uk), as the guidance states no meetings or conversations with parents will take place. The Government are also stating that parents must wash or change pupils' clothes every night ready for the next day to minimise the spread of the disease. Regular handwashing and other strict hygiene procedures will be followed at all times in school and our cleaning and premises staff will be working throughout the day to ensure regular cleaning and sanitising of the school environment.

The current guidance states that children will be taught in classrooms with a maximum of 15 pupils. We have risk assessed this and taken into consideration the size and layout of our classrooms. We have decided that our classrooms will have a maximum of 10 pupils. This way we are able to spread children out as much as possible, making the rooms as safe as we can for our pupils and staff. These classes will be different to what your child is used to. For example, we will have to limit the equipment that can be used and minimise movement around the class. Your child will be assigned to one classroom and children in different classrooms will not be allowed to mix with other children or adults.

Please also understand that your child may not be taught by their class teacher (primarily due to smaller class sizes) and they may be with a teacher from a different year group who they may not be familiar with.

The curriculum offer will also look very different. There is unlikely to be any additional small group or 1:1 intervention, other than children with an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP). Children will be allocated a chair and a table and have the necessary basic resources in front of them for their use only. Reception children will be able to play. However, there will be a limited range of resources available to them. It must be understood that Reception children are likely to come into contact with other children due to their age and the nature of their school day.

Children will need to keep their coat, lunchbox and drink with them at their desk to avoid contact in the classroom areas. We will keep as many doors and windows open as much as possible, following government guidelines to do this, so the pupils will need a jumper in case it gets chilly in class. Children do not need to wear their school uniform.

During lunchtime, children will remain with their group only. There will be some flexibility for where they can eat (e.g. not in the dining hall, maybe a socially distant picnic lunch in the playground). Break times and lunchtimes will be staggered and again children will remain in their allocated groups during these times and will not be able to mix with other children from different groups.

I understand that these changes may seem severe; we are trying to adhere to the guidelines and most importantly keep your child and all members of staff safe. We will continue to work with staff and governors to review our provision as things develop, ensuring that it is safe, manageable and in the best interests of the school community.

We have been phoning families in the year groups above to see who intends to send their children to school. We have been unable to reach some families where calls have not been answered. If we have not reached you and you want a place for your child in the above year groups, you need to email [admin@rcobden.camden.sch.uk](mailto:admin@rcobden.camden.sch.uk) to let us know.

Once we have a clear idea of numbers, we will be able to finalise our risk assessment and planning and then send more details to those parents who have indicated that their child will return to school in June. **Your child may not start until we have confirmed a start date and the new procedures for your child's class with you.**

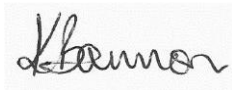
The government guidance has made it clear that it is not compulsory for parents to send their children to school at this time and there will be no penalties if you choose to keep your child/children at home.

If a child, young person or staff member lives in a household with someone who is extremely clinically vulnerable, as set out in the 'COVID-19: guidance on shielding and protecting people defined on medical grounds as extremely vulnerable guidance', it is advised they only attend an education or childcare setting if stringent social distancing can be adhered to and, in the case of children, they are able to understand and follow those instructions. This may not be possible for very young children and older children without the capacity to adhere to the instructions on social distancing. If stringent social distancing cannot be adhered to, we do not expect those individuals to attend. They should be supported to learn or work at home.

Thank you for your patience and support during this time. I will be finalising arrangements and sending more details as soon as possible.

Stay safe.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'K Bannon', on a light grey rectangular background.

Kathy Bannon