



St Mary's Church of England School

Infants:

Amyand Park Road
Twickenham
TW1 3HE

T: 0208 892 5840

Middle:

Strafford Road
Twickenham
TW1 3AD

T: 0208 249 6836

F: 0208 891 1904

Juniors:

Richmond Road
Twickenham
TW1 3BA

T: 0208 892 7849

F: 0208 607 0420

E: info@st-marys.richmond.sch.uk

www.st-marys.richmond.sch.uk

Friday 15th May 2020

Dear Parents,

It has been a busy week and we have been working closely with the Governing Body to issue this joint newsletter.

On Sunday the Prime Minister shared the Government's indicative plan for a possible re-opening of schools. We continue to receive detailed guidance from the DfE on the safety measures schools would be expected to take when re-opening, plus their recommendation on which pupils to invite back first.

It is clear that we are now entering into a new phase of learning provision, for both the short and medium term. Given that, we felt it was important that we provide you with an overview of our priorities during this unprecedented time. We are working to ensure safety, positive mental health and happiness, quality of education, and fairness of access for all our children. These priorities have driven what's been put in place to date, and will continue to inform our plans moving forward.

To date:

Safety comes first. Our school, like all others across the country, was asked to close to all but the children of key workers to ensure safety of staff, pupils and their wider families. At this time, despite being entitled by the Government to put their children in school, many parents of key workers chose to keep them at home. This included some teachers and parents of the vulnerable who felt it was right to keep exposure and transmission of the virus to a minimum by keeping their children out of school if they could.

When we were asked to close, the situation was unprecedented and deeply troubling for the children. The absolute top priority for the school at this stage was to focus on their happiness and positive mental health. This drove the tone and content of our Home Learning, communications and videos. The Home Learning we had put in place before the Easter holidays was well received by the majority of parents and the overwhelming feedback we received from our survey was to do more of the same, along with some increased access to teachers, which we began to put in place immediately. It is – and remains – our strong belief that only happy and secure children can learn.

Going forward:

As the school is asked to put in place measures for re-opening again, our focus returns to safety. We are being driven by what is safe for staff and pupils given government guidelines and our duty as both an education provider and an employer. We are doing a thorough risk assessment based on how we'd manage to conduct the required level of social distancing and maximum class sizes given our physical layout and number of teachers and support staff. This is in part dependent on the actual numbers who intend to send their children to school. We recently sent out a survey to parents impacted to ask if they plan to send their child to us if the Government 5 key COVID tests



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are met. Results of the survey indicate a high proportion of parents, across all three year groups, do intend to send their children back to school.

Once we begin our phased re-opening, resourcing these safety measures clearly has an implication for the entire school. We are committed to ensuring we continue to provide a high quality of education and fairness of access to all children. In light of the latest Government guidance, but still without further information on when social distancing could be relaxed, it is increasingly clear that Home Learning will continue to play an important role for many of our children, including pupils in years R, 1 and 6 who for various reasons cannot attend in person.

Given the changes ahead, the school is planning to adapt its Home Learning provision to enable teachers to review work and deliver feedback to the children to help with their continued motivation. Further details about this will be shared next week.

We also wanted to reassure you that, at every stage, we continue to be led by Government's guidance, whilst working closely with Achieving for Children, the LDBS, other local primary schools and Teaching Unions to ensure we are not working in isolation.

Reception, Year 1 and Year 6:

We will be in touch with the parents of these year groups as our plans for a phased return develop.

We hope this information is helpful. We would like to thank you for your continued support for the school in these unprecedented times. As has been the case throughout this process, we will be finding a way to move forward that we feel is in the best interests of the whole community - pupils, families and staff at St Mary's.

Yours sincerely,

Angela Abrahams
Headteacher

Malcolm McKinlay
Co- Chair

Andrew Gunn
Co-Chair

