



21/05/20

Dear Parents/Carers,

Thank you for all of your support, patience and kindness at this very unusual time. Positive messages of support from families and parents really do make a difference. We know that this has been a difficult time for so many of our families.

If you are struggling with anything – home learning, school meal vouchers, finances or any other issues, please do get in touch. We are not here to make judgements; we are here to help. There are families who have contacted us and we have been able to help so please don't suffer in silence. If you don't want to contact us, Brighton and Hove Council has set up this service to help. Please see a link to the council's help form - <https://new.brighton-hove.gov.uk/coronavirus-covid-19/request-help-yourself-or-someone-else>.

We are sure you will be very aware of the Government announcement that they would like schools to begin to reopen on the 1st June, if they think it is safe. Whilst we are very keen to welcome more children back to school, there is a large amount of planning to do before we can do this. Therefore, the provision in school will remain as it is, at least for the next 3 weeks.

Thank you to those of you who filled in the parent questionnaire – as you can imagine, there was a wide range of opinions and you asked some good questions which will help us moving forward. Some of you are anxious about schools reopening before September and some of you would send your children back to school now. We are all different, our lives all have a different context and we all have different fears.

We are aware that for MOST people getting the virus, they will have mild symptoms. However, as we know, some will go on to develop a serious, life threatening illness. By April 20th, 65 education workers had died from Covid-19. There are still reports of school staff across the country developing the virus, even with limited provision and extra precautions. We want to do everything we can to make sure that this does not happen to one of our staff.

The limited scientific evidence suggests that whilst children may not be as at risk as adults in developing serious symptoms, they can still get coronavirus and can still infect other, more vulnerable people. As most children have been protected from exposure to the virus since March 23rd, the scientific base for this evidence is small and therefore not yet wholly reliable. It seems though, that although your children may not be as much at risk, they will be at risk of spreading the virus to school staff or bringing the virus home to your family. One of the risk points is you as parents passing the virus on to each other whilst picking up and dropping off. We want to do everything we can to make sure this does not happen to one of our families or one of our staff or their families.

We do have staff members who have had wider family affected by this terrible virus and they have seen the devastating effect it has had on their loved ones. Some have even lost family members. We know some of our wider families will have experienced this too. We would rather we took our time, than lose someone from our school community.

We also have staff who cannot come back to school yet as they themselves are vulnerable or live with someone who is vulnerable. These staff will continue to work hard at home but it does limit our capacity in school.

'Let Your Light Shine' (Matthew 5:16)





However, we must try not to let our fears and worries take over and we intend to take small steps towards reopening whilst being very aware of the risks. From Monday 15th June, we plan to reopen to some very small groups of children and we aim to start with Year 6. It's important that you know that no child will be in school every day, unless they are the child of a keyworker that requires it. If you are a keyworker and will now require care – please complete the keyworker form on the website and email it to the school office.

During the week beginning 1st June, we will get further information out to you all. If your child is offered a place, you do not have to send them to school. You will not receive a fine if your child does not return to school before September.

We know that the online learning we have offered up until now has been a positive mix of activities that should be easier for you to do at home. All parents have been doing their best with regards to home learning, however the range of access to technology whether that be access to a computer or working internet is huge. The differing levels of confidence and ability of parents to support home learning is also massive. Some parents are having to juggle more than one child, looking after vulnerable relatives and possibly working from home or continuing to work now, not from home. The same can be said for our staff who may also be experiencing similar issues.

The sudden and unexpected need for an online school has further highlighted the inequalities in society and the differences between families. If we had had the time and resources (including money) we would have been able to set up home learning that used the technology that all would have had the same access and training on. This however isn't the reality of where we find ourselves.

Zoom and other online platforms have had a few teething problems and there remain safeguarding concerns that have been shared by the Council, Safeguarding Leads for the Council and the police. I am sure all parents would be happy with a lesson on Zoom; however, they would be unhappy if it included inappropriate or unfiltered content which has sadly been the case. This is then the teachers' responsibility to deal with – an almost impossible task.

We know that as this pandemic continues, there is more need for structured lessons. Therefore, over the next 3 weeks, we will be reviewing our off site provision and making some changes to this. Home learning activities and learning will be provided until the end of the summer term but this may look a bit different than it has done.

Teachers are experts at supporting children with gaps in their learning. It will be our job to "pick up the pieces" when everyone is back to school. We know that missing education is not good but to put this into context, pupils will have missed 13 weeks schooling out of 14 years of education. Most children are in the same situation – they have all missed the same amount of learning. We will do our very best to close any gaps that have been created throughout this time. The priority has been to keep them safe and well in these unprecedented times.

We miss you all very much.

Warm Regards,

Katie Blood
Headteacher

'Let Your Light Shine' (Matthew 5:16)

