



St. Mary's Catholic Primary School, Birchley

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Dear Parents/Carers,

I am writing to you all separately, as Y6 parents, to offer further clarity and guidance regarding the phased re-opening of school.

As a school we felt that it was more appropriate to write to you all personally, at a later date, to share with you our plans to say goodbye to our Y6 children, rather than including the information in the detailed letter that went out on Friday. We were also reluctant to share proposed plans with you and your children and to build up their hopes, in case we were unable to facilitate the Y6 children returning – meaning that all of our plans would have been for nothing. However, following some concerns raised on Monday, we felt that it was pertinent to bring the letter forward in order to allay further concerns and worries.

Firstly, can we start by clarifying the misconception that the Y6 children and their families were being ignored and were not being seen as a priority whilst they had 'finished' St. Mary's. This is simply not the case and nothing could be further from the truth.

In a time when lots of confusion and mixed messages are being given, governors agreed to follow the advice from the LA, Government and SAGE in determining which year groups should return to school first – all advice being that after the key worker/vulnerable children group – Reception and Y1 children should be the next priority groups.

In the letter that went out to parents on Friday, arrangements were clarified with the parents of our Reception and Y1 children in order to plan for their safe return to school, and as they are the first targeted year groups to return, it was essential that much of the letter focused upon these arrangements, in order to help and support the families of our younger children. The other year groups were not ignored.

The letter did refer parents to a timetable showing the order of priority for children returning to school and on this timetable, it does highlight week beginning 6th July as a possible start date for our Y6 children to return to school. The final bullet point on page 3 also states '*Before each new year group returns to school further details will be sent out explaining how their return will be organised.*' This was the plan for our Y6 children.

Like yourselves, we are really keen for our Y6 children's achievements to be celebrated and their time spent at St. Mary's marked in the most fitting way possible. We had already talked to the children about them returning in September (or as early as safely possible) for a 'Leavers' Celebration'. We also spoke with the children about how their Leavers' Celebrations would be very different than previous years, but in no way less special.

By planning for our Y6s to return to school at the beginning of July we felt that it would give them the best possible opportunity to come together as a whole class – as opposed to being taught in groups of 10, who cannot mix socially. We had hoped that by this time the R rate would be lower and that social distancing restrictions would have eased further. We also felt that, by this time, parents would have felt more reassured about their children coming to school and that there was a greater possibility that all of the year group would return.

If this had been the case, we had planned to offer our Y6 children two weeks of leavers' activities – culminating in a family picnic on the school grounds – weather and social distancing rules permitting – on Friday 17th July.

We really do hope that these plans can be implemented and that we are able to send our Y6s off with a temporary goodbye and a promise to celebrate further in the new academic year.

If we are unable to follow our plans, then our Y6 children (capacity allowing) will be invited back into school on the 6th July and will be divided into small protective bubbles of 10. Each bubble will work with an adult (who may not be their teacher).

If this was the case, then as promised in Friday's letter, further details e.g. start and end times; entrance/exit points; lunch arrangements etc. would be shared with you prior to their return date. We would also try to give the children who do return to school at this time, the best possible finish we can – whilst maintaining their protective bubbles.

We are all keeping our fingers crossed that our Y6s can return as a cohort as they do deserve a fantastic send off. They are a very special year group, who have had an extremely challenging final year at St. Mary's. Their achievements and accomplishments absolutely need recognising and we will do our utmost to ensure that their Leavers' Celebrations are ones that they will remember in years to come.

We hope that this letter clarifies our Y6 arrangements further and reassures you that they will simply not be forgotten. We will be in touch over the coming weeks to keep you informed of any further plans/arrangements.

If you do need to discuss things further, please contact school.

Take care everyone and stay safe.

Kind regards

A Hymers

Mrs Andrea Hymers
Headteacher

