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Dear Parents and
Carers,

I hope this letter finds you and your family well. As news broke yesterday around children in Years 2-5 not returning to school this term I thought it would be important to 'get in touch' with you all, as I'm sure there are lots of questions surrounding the recent announcements.

Latest news and thoughts on the Covid-19 situation

Will all children be returning to school this term?

I imagine that many of you will have seen or heard in the news yesterday that the plan for all primary school years in England to go back to school, before the end of term, is to be dropped by the government. They announced some weeks ago that they had aimed for all primary pupils to spend four weeks in school before the summer break. They now say that this is no longer feasible and instead schools will be given 'flexibility' over whether or not to admit more pupils.

Head teachers and teacher unions have been saying since the first instructions were given by the government that we would not be possible to welcome more children back to school unless social distancing rules were relaxed. It's not possible to massively increase the space each class needs to meet social distancing rules, and bring everyone back. Unfortunately, there simply isn't enough room or enough staff to have all our children in school.

In special schools like ours, we have a little flexibility to be able to bring different year groups in, depending on the needs of the pupils and we have been able to do this, but due to staffing and space needs have limited capacity to extend hugely before the end of the summer term. I cannot wait for the day when it will be deemed safe for all of our children to be back in school together and we will make sure we celebrate that day in a suitable manner!

Will home learning continue?

If your child is already back at school there will be no need for you to worry about home learning.

The children in school will be carrying out the same (or similar) activities to those produced for the children at home.

If your child is not attending school, staff are fully committed to providing home learning for your children, and we will continue to do our best to provide this. Staff are also committed to answering your emails and telephoning to speak to you and the children. As we have adapted how we keep in touch through the lockdown, the staff have taken real pleasure in speaking with your children on the phone.

While we are not expecting work to be submitted regularly, we know how important positive feedback is, especially at the moment, and we would love for you to carry on sharing what you have been doing with us. We will still collect completed work, when we drop off the next batch of learning.

Some parents have asked for extra work to be sent, and we are happy to resource this if you feel you need extra ideas on top of what is already sent to you. We have made a real effort to ensure all our families have whatever they need to help their children with their learning so if there is anything else we can do then please don't hesitate to get in contact.

Can the school offer video conferencing and online teaching?

So far, we have not taken up video conferencing and online teaching for a range of reasons:

- **The classroom experience cannot be replicated by live video lessons** Successful interactive teaching strategies for young children cannot be utilised via video. The National Education Union has advised schools against these for primary aged children.
- **Engagement and access for all.** We are aware that not all families in the school have access to high quality internet or an appropriate device, and some have only limited access (i.e. one iPhone between several people). As far as we as a school are concerned, we cannot justify offering a video conference or live lesson knowing that some families will have no means of accessing them.
- **Pressure on children and parents** We know that many parents are working from home and we do not want families to feel pressurised by engaging at particular days and times.
- **Teachers' role** Many teachers have pre-school children, older school-age children, teenagers and elderly relatives to care for whilst at home at this time, without access to usual childcare and carers. It would have been unreasonable to expect them to do more than we are already asking of them.

We really do understand your frustrations with extended weeks of home learning. We would dearly love all our children to be back at school, but the decisions about how to re-open were not in our hands. We look forward to welcoming our Year 6 children next week to complete their transition work in readiness for a move to secondary in September.

What is the situation for September? Will we be 'back to normal?'

I have been asked by parents today 'What about September?' In all honesty, none of us knows yet! There is a lot of speculation in the news media, but a lot of it is assumptions made on the basis of a little information.

As soon as we know anything, we will let you know. It is our profound hope to get all of your children back into school as soon as it is safe to do so. Upon their return we will be prioritising their

mental health, wellbeing and happiness, and helping them to make-up for lost time in a stress-free and enjoyable way. They will need to socialise and learn again in a larger group and we will need to make sure that our curriculum meets their needs.

Sal Mansfield (SENCO) and I are working with other school leaders and staff on developing a Recovery Curriculum that will meet the needs of all our learners in the next school year, and this is an exciting piece of work.

Thankfully, I feel very proud of how our school always puts the children's welfare and emotional needs before anything else and I am excited to be able to plan for everyone's return in the future.

Once again, the NHLC family have been amazing to each other. I have been overwhelmed with the kind messages and emails from parents showing their appreciation for the hard work and dedication shown by our staff and equally overwhelmed by the way the staff have gone 'the extra mile' to make sure they do all they can for the young people. I have never been prouder to be Head teacher of our school than I have over the past few months and I thank you all for your continued support through these difficult times.

Please keep in touch and take care.

Tania Craig