

Rowlands Gill Primary School

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Dear Parents / Carers

Update on Partial Re-opening

I wrote to you last week, following the Government's announcement that schools should prepare to reopen from the 1st June and sent out a questionnaire to find out how many parents would intend sending their child back to school. Thank you to those of you who took the time to respond, as this has helped me in drawing up the plans for potential re-opening.

Throughout this pandemic we have been supported by Gateshead Local Authority and a team of headteachers, who have represented a group of local schools at all meetings and discussed the issues facing schools, in particular making them as safe as possible. **Headteachers, with the support of the Local Authority, have agreed that the initial date suggested by the Government of 1st June is too early and have postponed the partial re-opening for the time being.**

The reasons behind this difficult decision were:

- It is generally agreed that Gateshead and the North East has one of the highest transmission and infection rates in the country for Covid19. We are, therefore, cautious about bringing large numbers of people together in a confined space for a number of hours. Although this position may be improving, the situation remains fragile.
- The scientific evidence is not yet conclusive regarding child to child and child to adult Coronavirus transmission. This is a significant issue when working with younger children, where social distancing becomes impractical and unrealistic. If asymptomatic children are capable of spreading the virus, the impact on families and communities could be severe. <https://www.rcpch.ac.uk/resources/covid-19-research-evidence-summaries>
- The Government has yet to confirm progress on their five tests, which is a key condition they set for schools, to bring more children into school. This is not expected until Friday 29th May, which is too late for an opening of 1st June.
- Schools have not had sufficient time to complete and consult on robust risk assessments.

Crucial to my plans for re-opening is the need to make school as safe as possible for children, staff and parents. There are many risk factors which I have to consider, in depth, in order to complete a comprehensive risk assessment. Part of this risk assessment includes the need to update and alter many policies and procedures in school, and in turn ensure that guidance to parents, staff and children is clear and easy to understand. All of these things take a long time.



As soon as we are clearer on an appropriate date to begin to re-open for the key year groups – Nursery, Reception, Year 1 and Year 6, I will let you know with as much notice as I can. My priority is ensuring that all who return to school, do so in the safest way possible.

Arrangements for Key Worker children who have been attending school for childcare for the last 9 weeks, remain unchanged for now. As stated in my newsletter, if anyone is a key worker and doesn't already have a place, it is crucial that you contact school within the next week to secure one. We have a limit on the number of children we can safely admit and once that number is reached there will be no more places.

Home learning packs will continue to be provided for all classes and will continue to be provided even when some children return. There will be no pack for this week coming (25th May) because it is the half term holiday. They will be available again on our school website from 31st May.

Despite the restraints of this pandemic, our aim remains the same - to provide the best education for our children and the best support for our community. We are working incredibly hard to make necessary arrangements for school to feel as normal as it can, so that when children return, they feel safe and happy. We also aim to provide very clear information to parents about what school will be like and the decisions we are making as a staff, in collaboration with our Governing Body, to provide the warm, caring and secure environment that the children deserve. However we also understand that there will be parents who feel it is too soon for their child to return and we fully understand and respect that too.

Once again, I wish I could give you a date when normality will return and all of our children can return to school. At the moment I can't, but please be assured that we are doing all we can to welcome children back when it is appropriate.

We send all our love from the whole team here at Rowlands Gill Primary School.

Yours faithfully



Mrs L Clarke
Headteacher

