

21<sup>st</sup> May 2020

Dear Parents/Carers,

As we head towards the end of Week 9, I continue to be overwhelmed by your support and kindness. All the staff at WFS really appreciate it and although we would ideally love to all be back together again with the children, your kind words makes it a little more bearable.

Some good news, we welcome back Emma Kallitsakis back into the 6<sup>th</sup> form after having her baby. We are so pleased to have her back and are looking forward to getting back to normal.

It has been a busy week trying to get in touch with all of you to ascertain your views on whether you would like your child to return to school before the end of term. Please remember special schools have different guidance than mainstream schools and special schools are rarely mentioned on the news. We will not be returning in year groups like mainstream schools, but gradually increasing our numbers across the summer term on a risk assessment basis – and if the governments five key tests are met. I know several of you have struggled with the decision, but 80% of families have chosen to wait until September at the earliest before returning their children to school. This helps us immensely in ‘testing’ out our new procedures and protocols.

For those of you who do not want your child to return to school until September at the earliest, we will be in touch towards the end of July to let you know how we will operate a return to school for greater numbers.

Those that do want to return, we will be in contact with you during week beginning 1<sup>st</sup> June to discuss the risk assessment and what we can provide, if anything. Remember the teachers will not be in school, they will continue to support the families and maintain the level of contact as they are now. Your child may not be in their normal classroom, as we are having to limit rooms in order to keep them clean, and will have staff that are available and not necessarily known to your child. You will also need to provide lunch in a wipeable box and send drinks in. We are continuing the Free School Meal vouchers until 17<sup>th</sup> July which is why we ask you to provide the lunch. For the small numbers attending school, the increase of kitchen staff into the building is not sensible and nor is it a risk I want to take.

Please can I also add that if you are sending your child back, you as a family need to follow the COVID-19 guidance if I am putting myself and my staff at risk. If we believe you are not following the guidance, we will have to risk assess again and you may not be able to send your child to school. The safety of pupils and staff is my number one consideration – always.

We also need to look at transport as they are limiting the number of children travelling on buses – quite rightly.

As I have said previously, in September until October half term we are keeping the class teams as near as possible to what they are now, and classrooms will be the same so children can have some continuity when they return. I will have to make some staff changes where staff are on maternity or have been promoted etc. You will have the class team names by 12<sup>th</sup> June at the latest. We will then use Autumn 1 to transition to our new classes in readiness for a November 2<sup>nd</sup> start.

I know many families develop special bonds with the staff at WFS and we are proud of this, however please remember that my staff have their own lives, families and personal life and you shouldn't be calling at their homes.

The government announced the following this week;

Children with special educational needs and disabilities in England will benefit from £37.3 million of direct support in 2020-21, which is expected to help more than 75,000 families in England.

Families with children that have complex needs and disabilities will receive grants for vital equipment to make their lives easier while implementing social distancing measures, including computers, specialist equipment and educational toys.

£10 million of the total has been committed specifically in response to the unique difficulties presented by the coronavirus pandemic, helping parents educate and look after disabled or critically ill children who are staying at home more than usual.

The multi-million-pound settlement for Family Fund, detailed today by Children and Families Minister Vicky Ford, will help low-income families with seriously ill or disabled children with the cost of equipment, goods or services - from washing machines and refrigerators to sensory and educational equipment that they might not otherwise be able to afford. The grants are typically worth £400 to £500 per family, but vary depending on need.

Have a look on the <https://www.familyfund.org.uk> website and if you want to apply but need some help please let your class teams know or email [office@wfs.worcs.sch.uk](mailto:office@wfs.worcs.sch.uk) and we can help.

And finally, did you know there is a Learning Disability Acute Health Liaison service within Worcestershire? They are employed by Worcestershire Health and Care NHS Trust supporting across Worcestershire Royal Hospital, The Alexandra Hospital and Kidderminster Treatment Centre. Their role is to support people with Learning Disabilities when they need to access acute health care. Currently there is a full-time nurse based at Worcester Royal (01905 763333), his name is Ross and he works 9.00am – 5.00pm Monday – Friday and there is Jane based at the Alexandra Hospital Redditch (01527 503030) and works 9.00am – 5.00pm Monday – Wednesday. They both cover Kidderminster Treatment Centre on request and when you ring ask for the Learning Disability Liaison Nurse. I'll put their poster on the website for more details.

Thank you again for your unwavering support,

Bec Garratt

Headteacher