



WIMBLEDON CHASE PRIMARY SCHOOL

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Message from the Co-chairs of Governors

Dear Parents,

We wanted to provide an update for you all from the Governors. We hope this finds you and your families well after a very challenging period and as the summer term comes to an end.

Update on school re-opening

We realise that this has been a period of real disruption and turmoil for our School, and a time of sadness and loss for many in our community. It has been wonderful to see the children returning to school, even just for a couple of days, and reconnecting with friends and teachers. However, we, like you, are disappointed that, despite all reasonable efforts, we finish the term without all children having been able to return to school full time. Jill and the staff team have been working tirelessly to enable as many children to return safely for at least some period of time this term, and to do so in a way that benefits all children so far as possible. That experience has been very positive based on the feedback we have had.

However, we fully understand that the situation has been frustrating for children, parents and staff and that changes in guidance and announcements over time have raised and dashed expectations. As parents ourselves, we identify with this feeling of frustration and thought it might assist to provide some further detail to explain the rationale for the approach the school has taken.

As Jill has explained, the current focus is on ensuring that all children can return safely and sustainably to school full-time in September. Jill will be sending full details regarding the plan for full school opening to you next week. The Governors have been focussing on supporting the school with those plans.

Feedback – thank you

In providing this update, we wanted to acknowledge the hugely valuable feedback that we have received from many of you – both formally and informally. Thank you for taking the time to share your thoughts and insights, and thank you also for your understanding of the challenges the school has faced at this difficult time. We have had conversations with many of you both informally and via the chair's email, we have collected informal input via parent governors, and we know that Jill and the Senior Leadership Team (and wider staff team) have been liaising with class representatives from each year group, including via a remote meeting

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which took place on 12th June, and with the wider parent body via telephone calls and emails.

A number of themes have emerged from the feedback. Much of this has been very positive: parents have paid testament to staff's commitment, to the overall quality and flexibility of the remote learning, the video messages and assemblies, and to the very positive times children have had whilst back at school. Some of the feedback has questioned or challenged certain decisions that were made in relation to the remote learning educational provision and the phased re-opening of the school. There has been no single "right" approach in addressing the huge challenges of this period, which is unprecedented for us all, and there is obviously room for debate and reflection. Having considered the experiences of other schools, and having been working with Jill and the SLT every step of the way, we are satisfied that Wimbledon Chase's response has been positive and successful overall in meeting the challenges it has faced as best it can, during these extremely difficult circumstances.

In the interests of transparency and openness, we hope that the FAQ at the end of this letter may assist.

Equality, Diversity & Inclusion at Wimbledon Chase

We know that the school community was horrified by the recent death of George Floyd and the urgent call to action this brings in tackling racism in society. The school has an active focus on diversity, inclusion and equality which we continually assess over time to ensure the best possible educational experience and outcomes for all children. We recognise and celebrate the previous success of the school in fostering a strong organisational culture of inclusion but appreciate there is still more that we can and should do. We are committed to implementing strategies which achieve long lasting and effective change.

We have discussed our current approach this term in the light of recent events and will continue this important body of work in the Autumn term in line with our ongoing commitment. Our Vice Chair of Governors, Michael Fernando, is part of a specially created forum with other colleagues across the London Borough of Merton. The forum shares current best practice and discusses co-ordinated whole-school approaches. The group shares sources of appropriate anti-racism expertise, considers how resources can be best allocated and places the lived experiences of minority communities in education, and in particular black children and adults, at its centre in informing strategy. Michael shares this learning with the Governing Body and will continue to do so to ensure our approach can improve and evolve. We will work with Jill and the SLT to share this expertise. We are inviting the school council to our first meeting back in September so that we can hear directly from students about their feelings on this. We also welcome your input and feedback in this regard.

In the meantime, please get in touch with any further thoughts or feedback - chair@wimbledonchase.merton.sch.uk. Please take care and thank you for your strong partnership with us. We wish each of you a safe, healthy and relaxing summer.

With best wishes,

Zoe & Tom

Co-chairs of Governors

For and on behalf of the Governing Body

SCHOOL RE-OPENING FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS - FAQs

Q. Why is another local primary school taking a different approach to Wimbledon Chase Primary?

A. Jill is in regular contact with our 'cluster group' of local schools and the local authority – as such, we are all aware that different schools are taking different approaches and recognise that this divergence in strategies and operating models may lead to parents feeling frustrated and confused. Best practice is shared in these groups, however, each school has to tailor its planning based on two factors unique to each school: (i) its staff resources; and (ii) the physical resources i.e. the footprint of the building and grounds, the number of classrooms and the dimensions of the classrooms.

Q. How does Wimbledon Chase Primary's approach differ to other local primary schools?

A. The decision at Wimbledon Chase has been taken to ensure that some level of on-site provision can be extended to all year groups (including the whole of Nursery), not just limiting the intake to Reception, Year 1 and Year 6. This has been done whilst maintaining our online learning provision and providing for key workers. This decision was based on a whole range of factors including: representations from various parents with children in different year groups; feedback from class representatives; input from Governors; and consideration of the relevant guidance and staff capacity. In short, it was felt that this was the fairest approach for all of our community.

Wimbledon Chase has also supported the children of key workers throughout this period. Not every school has been able to do this or to do so in the way that we have done. Teachers and support staff have run these bubbles on a full-time basis to support key worker families and a number of vulnerable children. There has been high demand for this provision, which has materially impacted on staff availability. It has been a very important function for the community.

By way of comparison, other local schools have adopted different models based on their own factors, such as:

- **Dundonald Primary** has re-opened partially for Nursery and fully for Reception, Year 1 and Year 6 children only. As far as we are aware, they have no current plans to carry out a wider re-opening and Years 2 to 5 will not be returning on-site until September. As a result, some lessons have been commenced on Google meets.
- **Hatfield school, Morden** has reopened for Reception, Year 1 and Year 6 on a 4 day rota on alternate weeks. Nursery has not reopened. Additional year groups have been offered one half a day visit before the end of term.

Q. Why are some year groups only returning for two days? Wasn't the point of allowing alternate weeks for R, Y1 and Y6 to allow all children to return on that basis? Why can't the children return to school full time?

A. Put simply, the school doesn't have sufficient resources to both: (a) deliver more days of on-site provision than we are currently managing; and (b) continue to remain compliant with current DfE and public health guidance. All staff available to work have been deployed to support the wider re-opening - there is no excess of staff. Staff levels have been down overall by 20% from normal.

We appreciate that some parents may feel frustrated at the current amount of on-site provision and physical interaction with teachers. This is entirely understandable. The initial intention was to enable children from all year groups to return for more than just 2 days. But this

has not proved practically possible. By way of summary of the very real practical challenges that the school has had to navigate:

- The DfE 'two metre' distancing guidance for schools remains in place and has not changed. Even a reduction to one metre would only enable one or two more desks per bubble because of room sizes.
- Class bubbles remain capped at a maximum of 15 children until the new academic year.
- Adults are not supposed to work across more than one bubble. If they do, this has had to be individually risk assessed. This has been done so that that more children could attend school.
- Adults remain with their designated bubbles for play and lunchtimes. This means at least two adults per bubble for comfort breaks and safeguarding. The recommendation of the DfE is that no more than two adults work in a bubble. However, we have had to increase adult numbers above this level in relation to certain children with special educational needs – again, this has had to be individually risk assessed.
- The key worker provision is full. We operate three full-time bubbles and this has had an impact regarding staff's ability to work as part of a class bubble. These bubbles are being taught and so require a Teacher and a Learning Support Assistant (LSA) as a minimum.
- We have a wonderfully committed and talented workforce, however, it is a finite resource. The school's planning has to be sustainable and flexible to account for reduced staff availability for: part time working; staff working across two schools; and medical guidance limiting staff's availability for work.

Q. As part of the remote learning provision, is it possible for the children to have more direct contact and communication with the Teachers?

This is a process of continuous improvement for all of us. New measures have been introduced through this period of disruption, with limited resources, and the school continues to evaluate the provision on an ongoing basis and listen to feedback from staff, students and parents.

You may not be aware of all of the steps that the school has taken to support our children. Here is a summary:

- Teachers have phoned and been in regular contact with vulnerable children and families throughout lockdown.
- Any child receiving ELSA have had weekly calls.
- SMT have made contact with all children where teachers have had a concern.
- Children attending ARP receive weekly phone calls and lessons.
- Teachers have been doing regular video messages.
- Weekly assemblies/messages by SLT.
- The virtual learning has continued and has not been replaced by Oak academy (as other schools have done).
- J2e blog and First news (Tapestry) have been in place since early on in lockdown to communicate with children.
- Staff commenced the J2e messaging recently and teachers have been available weekly online.
- Not all children have had access to laptops and so the school has tried where possible to provide these.
- Children who have not been at school are being telephoned by teachers (outside of the above groups).
- All children have now had the opportunity to return to school for at least 2 days with their teachers and friends.

Q. Why hasn't the school moved to online lessons like many private schools have done?

- The school has had a full virtual learning platform based on a variety of media since day 1 and this has continued throughout.
- There are various pros and cons to online learning – some safeguarding issues have been encountered with online learning, and the equality of provision for all has had to be considered (e.g. the access survey demonstrated that some families strongly preferred some non-online resources). It is also difficult for families with many children, even where they do have laptop access.
- WCPS has taken an approach involving some online resources, some paper-based resources, and a combination of video-messages and other ways of interacting with teachers.
- Overall, the feedback has been positive. Constructive feedback and learning points have been taken on board as swiftly and meaningfully as possible. This will also be built into a remote learning strategy for September.

Q. Will it be back to normal in September?

- Jill and her team are preparing for all children to return full-time in September, with governors' and Merton support. Until 2 July (when the guidance was issued), the school had been planning for curriculum recovery for the Autumn term. The school has also been forward planning for transitions for our pupils into school generally, as well as to their new year groups.
- In light of the new guidance, the current plan and expectation therefore is for the school to be fully open. However, we remain cognisant of the need to be able to respond flexibly and urgently to factors impacting on the educational provision, including fresh guidance and any second spike of coronavirus. The school has invested more in IT this term and is making arrangements to support and develop teachers' IT skills and build on this term's experience so that we may continue to improve in this new area of virtual learning. This will enable virtual learning to be made available and improved further in the event that it is needed for some or all children in September or thereafter.
- Jill is intending to circulate more detailed plans for September early next week.