

Carwarden House Community School

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small community **thinking big**

Friday 22nd May 2020

Dear Parents / Carers,

I really hope you and your families continue to stay well and are keeping safe during these difficult times.

It has been a very worrying few months for us all and the longer the situation continues, the more stressful it becomes. There is so much uncertainty about the future and what changes we will need to make in our lives to remain safe.

I want to assure you that our absolute priority remains protecting the health and wellbeing of everyone in the Carwarden community whilst also urgently considering how we continue to meet the specific needs of our students. We are your child's school and have an important job to do BUT we will only do this in the safest way possible.

Carwarden response to the Government's announcement on the 'wider opening of schools'

You will be aware that on the 12th May the Prime Minister gave us an indication of the Government's 'Road Map' for the next few months. This included some details on the 'wider opening' of schools at some point from the 1st June.

Plans for the remainder of the Summer Term

The guidance (for a phased return of YR, Y1 & YR 6 pupils from the 1st June and some 'face to face' learning by July for Y10s) was specific to **mainstream schools, not special schools.**

In the first instance, Special schools like ours are requested to continue doing what we are currently – providing child-care provision for the children of key / critical workers, those with a known social worker and those we have identified as particularly vulnerable. I am incredibly proud of the child-care provision we have developed in a very short space of time and we continue to slowly increase the number of students attending as we identify more that urgently need this support right now. The group that are attending – most a few days a week - are really benefiting from and thoroughly enjoying their limited time in school. We have worked incredible hard to implement rigorous safety procedures in school (based on all available information and guidance) and we remain determined to keep our ‘infection rate’ at zero. School must not become the place that spreads the disease to members of our community.

Planning for the Autumn Term

The Government has asked that *‘Special schools, special post-16 institutions and hospital schools should work towards welcoming back as many children and young people as can be safely catered for in their setting.... and to consider creating part-time attendance rotas so that as many children as possible can benefit from attending their setting’.*

We are now planning in detail how we might be able to offer all our students some time (part time attendance) in school from some point from September. We are considering a number of approaches based on Government guidance and those being developed in other special school settings.

I need to be clear, **we are not moving to making this wider offer to everyone until at least September**, and only then if we know it is safe to do so. When we are ready to invite your child back to school it will not be an offer of full time attendance as we will not be able to implement the safety measures required with ‘full’ numbers. But we do believe every student will benefit from at least some time in school on a regular basis. Of course, the number of students we can safely have in school on any particular day is entirely dependent on the number of staff we have available to work *and* the space available in our building. In any event, the choice of whether your child returns to school, in line with the new arrangements (once they are agreed) remains with you as parents.

I do not yet see a time in the future when we will return to ‘normal’ schooling (i.e. every student attending school every day) – certainly not in September and probably not well into next academic year.

This week all our staff have been consulted on the possible new ways of working from some point from September and they will contribute to this urgent and detailed planning. I will, of course, update you when we are clearer of what our approach is likely to be for next term.

As of 5pm on the 20th May a total of 36,042 people in the UK had died as a result of COVID-19. Whilst thankfully the number of deaths each day is slowly falling, we are still a long way off being able to put this behind us. The Chief Medical Officer and World Health Organisation are now saying that we are unlikely ever to completely get rid of COVID-19 – that we need to learn how to 'live with it'. How we do this in the safest way possible for everyone at Carwarden is our greatest challenge. I fully agree that Boris Johnson's recent drive (along with many Governments across the world) to have really effective 'track & trace' systems in place will be the key to getting on top of this pandemic. I look forward to this being implemented across the UK in the weeks and months to come.

Your child's health

We will shortly be sending you all a separate letter to ask for clarification on any of your child's health issues. It includes Government information on whether your child is deemed 'clinically extremely vulnerable' (high risk) or 'clinically vulnerable' (medium risk). We will need you to confirm this information so we can understand if your child is likely or not to return to school once we move to 'wider opening'. It may well be that you will want to ask for guidance from your child's GP or from other doctor's involved in their care in this respect. We want you to be absolutely clear whether it is safe for your child to return to school.

For your information we have posted the latest 'stay at home guidance' on our website.

Home-learning

We are currently looking at how we can introduce more Zoom 'lessons' (adding to but different from our Zoom 'Tutor Time' sessions). This will give your child the opportunity to have virtual 'face to face' time from home with their teacher and class friends with a clear focus on an aspect of their learning. More details to follow.

If your child is one of the very few who is not regularly using Zoom to meet their Tutor and their classmates, let us help you to get them 'connected'. We really don't want them to miss out!

Remember, if you or your child is struggling in any way or you have any questions about the information in this letter – or you would just appreciate a chat then please ring me anytime on **07377 019855** or email direct on tim.stokes@carwarden.surrey.sch.uk

Stay safe, stay positive and stay at home as much as possible,

Tim