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Dear Parents/Carers,

The Barham staff are desperate to return to teaching their classes and I am sure that many of you feel the same. We certainly hope to see every class by the end of the term but we will obviously have to wait for guidance from the government and local authority. The government is making a final decision about whether it is safe for schools to re-open at the beginning of June on Thursday, May 28th.

Following the government's announcement that schools could be reopening for groups of pupils, I would like to let you know what the senior leadership team and governors have decided regarding the next steps we will be taking. The responses from the survey were taken into consideration so thank you for taking the time to reply.

To gauge the views of parents I sent out questionnaires to the specific year groups that the government mentioned (Year R, Year 1 and Year 6). The vast majority of you in all three year groups were either unsure or have no intention of sending your child back at the moment. Concerns raised included: not safe yet, health reason of child or someone they live with, children can't understand social distancing, children will not understand the new routines, pupils might feel alienated.

Since sending out the survey, more guidance has been sent through to me from the Department for Education regarding how to minimise the risks for pupils and staff. Classes must be divided into 'bubbles' of a maximum of 15 pupils, several resources will be removed (a fair amount of the equipment in YR), and the bubbles are not allowed to mix. This would mean that some of the children would be taught in a group in an unfamiliar classroom, with an unfamiliar adult and without the usual classroom equipment. School leaders and governors have spoken at length about the restrictions and feel it would not be beneficial for our youngest children's wellbeing to return to school after a ten-week break to these conditions. Very little will be familiar - drop off points and pick up points will be different and the children may not be in the bubble with their normal class teacher. The curriculum for reception and Y1 cannot be taught easily under these conditions.

We want our children to come back to a welcoming, nurturing environment and until the restrictions are eased further, we have concerns that the youngest children will not have a positive school experience. We will, however, be constantly reviewing the situation as guidance is changing daily. We will review re-opening to YR and Y1 on June 12th.

Year 6 are older with more self-discipline and understanding of the situation so whilst the class will still need to be divided, we feel they will not be affected in the same way as the younger children by returning to school under the current restrictions. We will re-open initially to Y6 only but in the second week of term, on June 8th.



We understand that some Year R and Year 1 parents will be returning to work and that this will be dependent on childcare. We can offer some places in our key worker group in this situation to accommodate parents' return to work. The intention is to expand the two key worker groups – one for KS1 and one for KS2 from June 1st. The children will follow the same format as the current group which has proved to be a positive experience for the children attending. The day starts with some type of physical exercise, followed by home-learning lessons in the morning. As much time as possible is spent outside for the rest of the day. We also have a limited number of places available in the KS2 key worker group if you need to return to work and have no childcare.

If you would like your child to have a place from June 1st, please complete the attached form and return it to me (headteacher@barham.kent.sch.uk) by (tomorrow) 7:00pm on Thursday 21st May. Confirmation will be sent to you on Friday 22nd May.

Further information will be sent to year 6 parents regarding the arrangements for the return to school in the week beginning June 1st. You will be able to decide if your child would like your child to attend once you have seen the detailed information.

Home learning will continue to be provided for all year groups, including Year 6 in the new term. We are constantly reviewing what we provide and hope to keep it fresh for your children so that motivation levels do not dip. I am sure that some of you have found some weeks more of a struggle than other weeks but I have been extremely impressed by the amount and quality of work the children are producing. Next week there will be no home-learning as it is half term.

I would like to thank you again for all your support over the last few weeks. This decision was incredibly difficult to make and inevitably it will not satisfy everyone but our decision has been made on what we think is the best for the children of this school. As I have previously said, when whole classes return, the curriculum for all year groups will be adjusted to ensure that everyone is secure with the elements of learning that have been missed during lockdown. Children in Wrens will continue with the Foundation Stage curriculum from where they left off when they return.

In order to give you more detail about the decision-making process, I would need to write several pages but if you would like any further information, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Al Higgins". The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned above a light blue rectangular background.

Alison Higgins