



Tuesday 30th June 2020

Dear Parents,

I hope you have had a lovely weekend. The sunshine certainly seems to lift our moods but also makes home learning somewhat more challenging! It has been a little while since I have written to all parents, although there has been lots of communication with different year groups separately. As I am sure you can appreciate, the return to school for more children, along with all the usual end of year work – reading school reports, teacher recruitment and deployment, liaising with new Nursery and Reception parents, planning for the new academic year to name just some examples has all been complicated by the pandemic and its impact on schools. We are all grateful to parents for the ongoing support and understanding. I am writing today to provide you with some important updates.

Children returning to school

First and foremost, I wish to convey our disappointment and frustration at the current situation we are all faced with. Today we have 195 children in school and while it is so lovely to have more children back, and while the bubbles are running so successfully, it still does not feel like Barrow Hedges.

It is with much regret that I can confirm that we won't be able to welcome our Year 2s, 3s, 4s and 5s back to school this side of the summer holidays. I know that this will be hugely disappointing for many children and parents alike, as it is for us. Of course, we also know that there are many of you who have expressed that you feel happier with your child returning in September. A couple of parents have told us that they know of some schools that have been able to have certain children back. I think it is important to explain why it is that we cannot accommodate these year groups over the next few weeks:

As you will know from previous correspondence, at present nearly all our staff are back in school to supervise the 17, soon to be 18 bubbles of children we have.

We have also followed government advice and taken year groups in priority order:

From 1 June, as more children return to schools, we appreciate that each setting's circumstances will be slightly different. Any setting that cannot achieve the small groups recommended as part of the protective measures guidance should discuss options with their local authority or trust. If necessary, settings have the flexibility to focus first on continuing to provide places for priority groups and then, to support children's early learning, settings should prioritise groups of children as follows:

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Harbury Road Carshalton Surrey SM5 4LA

Telephone 020 8643 4428
office@barrowhedges.com



- *early years settings - 3 and 4 year olds followed by younger age groups*
- *infant schools - nursery (where applicable) and Reception*
- *primary schools - nursery (where applicable), Reception and year 1*

Any comparison to other schools' provision is inappropriate because each school has its own unique circumstances. For example:

- Many primary schools do not have nurseries who they have to prioritise and because we do, we then utilise staff for Nursery bubbles.
- Some schools are junior schools, so they only need cater for their Year 6 cohort. Say for example, there is a three form entry junior school which has 12 classrooms. To have their maximum of 90 Y6s return, they only need 9 classrooms for 9 bubbles of 10 children and 18 adults. This is far more simple than it is for a large primary school.
- Some schools are under subscribed (e.g. used to take two classes in each year group but now only have one form of entry) and therefore have more spare rooms to utilise.
- Staffing - each school would have a certain number of staff who are now exempt from returning to school and are required to work from home (e.g. if they are clinically vulnerable) - therefore some schools would have less adults to draw upon when creating bubbles.
- Similarly, there are infant schools, in Sutton, who have been unable to accommodate their Year 1s because they reached their capacity once they organised for their Nursery and Reception children to return.
- Children of critical workers and those that are vulnerable have to take priority over all other year groups. Therefore, for a school like ours with a large number of parents who are critical workers, there will be more staff deployed to these bubbles, and therefore less staff able to supervise other children (i.e. those in Years 2 to 5).

Although we are unable to create bubbles for Years 2 to 5, we very much want to provide children with an opportunity to come in to school to see their teacher, meet their new teacher and spend some time with their peers. I am sure you will appreciate that we need to do this safely and thank you in advance for your patience while we finalise arrangements. An invitation will be sent out to you shortly.

Online learning

We regularly review the online learning that we are providing and hopefully you will have already noticed some of the changes we have made. We very much recognise that after so many weeks of being away from school, that our online learning provision may need to 'reignite' children's interest in learning. A summary of the changes we have made from the beginning of last week are provided as an appendix at the end of this letter. We are hopeful these tweaks will make home learning more engaging and that children who will not return to school will feel less isolated as a result of the increased communication with their class teachers. Feedback thus far has certainly indicated this to be the case.

Contact with children

A couple of parents have asked about the possibility of teachers making contact with their children outside of a learning context and online. We understand how much the children will be missing their friends and teachers. Of course, as a school, our focus has very much been on supporting learning activities and we have therefore dedicated time to ensuring that, rather than just placing worksheet

after worksheet on our website, we have provided a far wider range of activities and ensured that there is a dialogue on Tapestry and Google Classroom. We have wanted children to feel connected to their teachers in this way. With many staff who are parents, we know how much children want and need the interaction with their peers and have seen how beneficial it is to set up “online meet ups” (e.g. via Zoom) or to make socially distant visits to friends. With school being largely closed, and with the current safety measures in place, we are unable to offer the social interaction and wide range of activities and experiences that school life usually provides - in much the same way as parents organise playdates under normal circumstances, we would very much encourage parents to do this at this challenging time. While we initially asked all staff not to use platforms such as Zoom, and still do not feel they are right for us to use in a home learning context, we have now told staff they may join Zoom class meetings set up by parents if they would like to do so. Some Teachers/Teaching Assistants have already done this to say hello to their class. Thank you to those parents who initiated this.

Last day of term and summer holidays

Our last day of term will now be Friday 17th July and school will finish at the usual time for your child’s current bubble (either 2.45pm, 3pm or 3.10pm as per the relevant Handbook). We now need to have Monday 20th and Tuesday 21st July as staff only working days as we are required to ensure that the school is ready for the new academic year and staff receive the appropriate information and training. Children of critical workers are permitted to attend on Monday 20th and Tuesday 21st July but will need to inform us by no later than Wednesday 15th July if this provision is required. Following the DfE announcement on Friday evening about there being no expectation for schools to open over the summer, **Barrow Hedges will not be open for any pupils over the summer holidays.**

End of year school reports

End of year reports and all the other documentation about the forthcoming year was scheduled to go out to parents on Tuesday 14th July, but due to the current situation information will be sent as follows:

Thurs 9th July – confirmation of your child’s new class name and teacher sent home to parents

Tues 14th July – documents relating to end of year reports and transition arrangements sent to parents

Weds 15th July – Nursery and Reception reports and other relevant documents sent to parents

Thurs 16th July – Year 1, 2 and 3 reports and other relevant documents sent out to parents

Fri 17th July – Year 4, 5 and 6 reports and other relevant documents sent out to parents

End of year school reports will be sent via ParentMail (PMX) and this needs to be done over several days due to each child’s report needing to be sent individually, so thank you for your understanding.

New academic year 2020/21

We are pleased to hear that all children can return to school in September. At present, we are unable to provide parents with any further information about what school will look like as we await

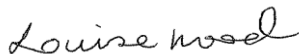
government guidance. Please be assured that whatever arrangements are made, there will be strict adherence to health and safety measures – this must be paramount. Many of you will have seen our Parent Handbooks that have been provided to those children who have already returned to school; but of course, many of you won't have seen these. If you are interested in reading about how we have welcomed our children back then you can find an example of one of these Handbooks on our website in the letters to parents section. Depending on the guidance provided, we aim to produce something similar for when all children return.

New Inclusion Leader

And finally, I am delighted to inform you that Mrs Michelle Rondeau will be joining Barrow Hedges in September, as Assistant Headteacher and Inclusion Leader, Mrs Rondeau joins us from one of other Trust schools where she is currently Assistant Headteacher, SENCO and Pupil Premium Lead. She has already attended a number of meetings with Mr Lowes as part of her induction to Barrow Hedges and I am sure you will join me in welcoming her to our school.

As always, do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions and I hope this letter finds you all safe and well.

Kind regards



Louise Wood

Headteacher

Appendix 1 - Changes made to online learning KS1 and KS2 – June 2020

- Assemblies on Google Classrooms on a Monday and a Friday. These are appropriate for the whole school and will include a video or audio of the different member of staff leading the assembly each week.
- Video messages from teachers on a Monday and a Thursday, uploaded to Google Classroom. These may include sharing a 'hello' with what the children will be assigned for the following two days; the sharing of a story/stimulus to help children with their writing, or general year group feedback on work that has been submitted.
- On Tuesdays and Fridays, year groups post a written message as normal - this will generally be done by the teacher in the year group who is working from home.
- An afternoon lesson on Monday/Tuesday/Thursday/Friday will be set, rather than them being optional activities (although ultimately all the work on Google Classroom is optional!). These are lessons from the Summer 1 or Summer 2 topic overviews that can easily be translated for remote learning.
- Spelling, Guided Reading, English and maths continues as normal. Maths or English lessons should take the children around 45 minutes, so if teachers think that the children are likely to whizz through an activity they are providing an extra sheet for children to complete to consolidate the learning or a 'Greater Depth Challenge' for higher attainers.
- English follows a similar structure to how we teach at school e.g. stimulus, WMG (what makes good), small writing tasks such as character/setting description, talk map, plan, big write, edit and improve.
- Teachers 'check in' with all the children in their class every other week.