

17<sup>th</sup> July 2020

Dear Families,

I hope that you are all safe and well as we approach the end of term; a term that has been very different to the one we had all anticipated back in March. It is usually at this time that we round up the year with a newsletter containing photos of events and celebrations from the Summer Term, but this year's letter will be a little different. That's not to say there is nothing to celebrate, far from it in fact. The way that you, our Riverside School families, have shown the true meaning of resilience and resourcefulness is nothing short of inspiring. Through the uncertainty and anxiety, you and your children have shown courage and creativity – quite simply, you have done an incredible job in the most testing of times.

Over the course of the past four months, in common with schools up and down the country, we have responded to government guidance and followed medical advice as it has been received. We have always tried to make the right decisions for our whole school community and have tried to act in accordance with our values throughout this period. Whether your child has been at school or at home, we hope that we have served you well. As we approach the last few days of term, we are pleased to have been able to offer a minimum of two days a week of school-based support since half term to all 180 families who requested it. For those pupils who have not returned to school, we hope that the home-based support has worked for you. Please know that we have never stopped thinking of you.

We know that you will be wondering what the Autumn Term will bring and **I can confirm that we plan to fully re-open the school, on a full-time basis, for all pupils.** The first day of term is Friday 4<sup>th</sup> September for pupils attending Riverside SPC and Riverside Beckenham and Monday 7<sup>th</sup> September for pupils attending Riverside West Wickham. We can't wait to welcome the pupils back and, whether your child is returning to their existing class, a new class or a new site, please be assured that we have put what we can in place to ensure the transition is as smooth as possible.

The latest guidance for full opening of special schools was published on 2<sup>nd</sup> July and can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-for-full-opening-special-schools-and-other-specialist-settings/guidance-for-full-opening-special-schools-and-other-specialist-settings>. A number of considerations are highlighted, including: *"The overarching principle to apply is reducing the number of contacts between children and staff. Maintaining distinct groups or bubbles that do not mix makes it quicker and easier in the event of a positive case to identify those who may need to self-isolate, and keep that number as small as possible. Settings should assess their circumstances and look to implement 'bubbles' of an appropriate size, to achieve the greatest reduction in contact and mixing, without unduly limiting the quality or breadth of teaching or access for support"*.

In line with the latest guidance, there will be some continued restrictions into the new term and we would like you to be aware that:

- Our current arrangements, whereby pupils are in small “teams”, will revert to our traditional class structure so, from September, your child will be based in their new class, with their new classmates and class staff.
- Classes will then be grouped into “bubbles”, consisting of 3 or 4 classes.
- Within bubbles, children will have the opportunity to mix safely with other children (for example, at lunchtimes and break times), but they will not mix with other children outside their bubble.
- Access to specialist spaces and resources will remain limited and risk assessed on a case-by-case basis. This includes, for example, access to trampolining, sensory rooms, soft play, etc.
- In order to get back into a structured routine, start and finish times will not be staggered, but will revert to our usual 9:00am start and 3:20pm finish times. We will, however, introduce additional measures to reduce the potential for children and adults to congregate at arrival or departure times.
- Our catering provider, Nourish, will be providing a full hot menu at lunchtimes from September.
- SEN Transport are aware of the school’s plans and are following government advice regarding the transportation of children with SEN to school.
- We are working closely with our therapy colleagues and you will receive further information regarding access to therapy input and nursing support from Bromley Healthcare soon.
- For the first half term, there will be no off-site school trips, swimming or school-based hydrotherapy; nor will we be able to hold large gatherings, such as assemblies or special events. These will all be reviewed at the end of the first half term.

Since the beginning of the pandemic, the safety of the whole Riverside School community has remained paramount and we have implemented a range of protective and preventative measures to reduce risks as much as we can (although we cannot eliminate all risks). These measures have included, and will continue to include:

- Encouraging social distancing as far as is practicable, given our pupils’ needs;
- Ensuring regular and increased cleaning in classrooms and shared spaces;
- Minimising the sharing of any resources and equipment and ensuring frequently touched objects and surfaces are cleaned and disinfected regularly;
- Encouraging frequent hand washing and good hygiene practices;
- Utilising outdoor space where possible;
- Keeping windows open to increase ventilation;

- Providing visual reminders and prompts to support children in their understanding of new practices (which we hope will also support their understanding about similar measures in the community).

Provision will be reviewed on a regular basis and will follow medical advice. If advice changes, we have a responsibility to respond accordingly and we will keep you fully informed. There are a few questions that remain as important now as before, so please familiarise yourselves with the information below:

What should I do if my child or anyone at home has Coronavirus symptoms?

If this is the case, your child should not come into school and as per the current NHS and government advice, you should keep them at home for a period of seven days. Where symptoms continue after seven days, or begin to worsen, you should call 111. If someone in your child's household has symptoms, your child must self-isolate for 14 days from the day the other person's symptoms started. This is because it can take 14 days for symptoms to appear.

### **What will happen if a child or staff member develops coronavirus symptoms at school?**

If a child or staff member develops Coronavirus symptoms, they will be sent home and advised to self-isolate for 7 days, and the rest of the household should self-isolate for 14 days. All staff and children who are attending school will have access to a test if they display Coronavirus symptoms and should not return to school before the results of the test are known.

### **What will happen if a child or staff member tests negative?**

If a child or staff member tests negative, they can return to school and their fellow household members can end their self-isolation.

### **What will happen if a child or staff member tests positive?**

If a child or staff member tests positive, the rest of their bubble will have to be sent home and advised to self-isolate for 14 days. Other household members do not need to self-isolate unless the child or staff member they live with subsequently develops symptoms.

### **We are travelling to a country that is either outside the common travel area or is not covered by the travel corridor exemption. What should I do?**

Coronavirus regulations mean that you must [self-isolate for 14 days](#) and your child cannot return to school during that time.

### **My child has been shielding. Are they able to return to school in September?**

We know that some pupils have been shielding and are no longer required to shield. For pupils with the most complex medical needs who are under the care of specialist health services, the RCPCH advice is discuss their care with health professionals before returning to school in

September. In such cases, please ensure all advice received is pass onto the school in a timely fashion.

As we round up this year, I would like to give a special mention to all our Riverside School leavers, from both Riverside SPC and Riverside Beckenham. This may not be the ending you had anticipated, but we are nevertheless sending you off with all our love and best wishes for the future. You, and your families, are always welcome at Riverside School and please keep in touch to let us know how you are getting on.

We are busy preparing for the opening of our third site in September and can't wait to launch Riverside West Wickham as soon as the final decision is made. The new site will mean that we will increase our pupil population to 300 pupils across three sites and we look forward to welcoming a new set of pupils and families to the Riverside School community.

In staffing news, we would like to say a huge thank you to three of our teachers, Jess Twyman, Kirsty Curry and Sophie Ayles, who will be moving on at the end of term – we would like to thank you for your contribution to Riverside School and we wish you all every success in your new schools. We are fully staffed for September, in all classes and across all sites, and this includes teachers, teaching assistants and midday supervisors. Our Leadership Team structure will be:

- Amy Price and Charlotte Downs, Assistant Headteachers, will be heading up our primary provisions across all the three sites and their time will be split between SPC, Beckenham and West Wickham.
- Kerry Reed and Clare Collett, Assistant Headteachers, will be heading up our secondary provision (KS3, 4 & 5) and will be based at the SPC site.
- Katie Strutt, Phase Leader, will be based at Riverside Beckenham on a full-time basis; Danni Costanza, Phase Leader, will be based at SPC (Primary) and Lucy Godley, Phase Leader, will be based at SPC (Secondary).
- Following Sue Crane's retirement, Naomi Walters joined us as School Business Manager last month and we look forward to working with Naomi, as well as all our new staff, when we return in September.

To end, I'd like to pay tribute to each and every member of the Riverside School community who has come together during these unprecedented times. Our pupils, families, staff, governors, multi-agency colleagues and community partners really have been "all in this together".

Wishing you all a safe, healthy and happy Summer and looking forward to September already!

Yours sincerely,



Steve Solomons  
Headteacher