

WOODHOUSE GROVE SCHOOL

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21st May 2020

Dear Parents

As we head towards another, no doubt surreal, Bank Holiday weekend, I hope you and your families all remain safe and well.

As Half Term approaches, we are entering a strange kind of no man's land with swirling speculation about the re-opening of schools; with briefings from the UK Government and counter-briefings from devolved administrations in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales, and further interventions from the teaching unions and media commentators. In short, there is currently no overriding consensus over a way forward and schools are left to try and make sense of all this confusion.

Last Friday, the teaching unions met with Chris Whitty, Chief Medical Officer; Jenny Harries, Deputy Chief Medical Officer; Patrick Vallance, Chief Scientific Adviser; Russell Viner, President of the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health (RCPCH); and Viv Bennett, Chief Nurse, Public Health England to discuss concerns over whether it is safe to commence a phased re-opening of schools from 01 June.

Dwight Eisenhower once said, "Plans are useless, but planning is essential" and given the vague, drip-fed and sometimes contradictory nature of the guidance we are receiving from the Department for Education, I am reminded of the old military maxim which says, "He who plans early plans often".

In articulating their roadmap to easing the lockdown in England, the Government has said that, first of all, schools should focus on bringing in children in Nursery, Reception, Year 1 and Year 6. Thereafter, their aspiration is that secondary schools will work towards the possibility of providing some sort of face-to-face contact with students in Year 10 and Year 12 in support of their continued remote, home learning.

Those of you who also have children at Brontë House will be aware that, in accordance with the Government's mandate, we are preparing to re-open our junior school to some pupils. Since the Prime Minister's announcement and subsequent briefings from the Secretary of State, Gavin Williamson, and other Ministers, more and more details are coming through as to how the Government believes this can be done appropriately and, most importantly, in a way that is safe for our children and staff. Throughout the lockdown period we have continued to offer places for the children of key workers and those who we believe are our most vulnerable. This provision has been based at Brontë.

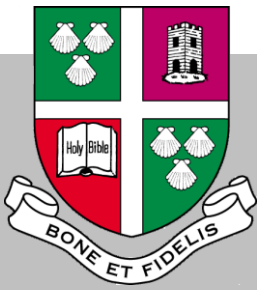
A plan is emerging to safely introduce our Nursery, Reception, Year 1 and Year 6 children back in to school. It is of great importance to us that we do this safely, making absolutely certain that we have the protocols in place to enable us to do this. We are also having regular meetings with Governors,

Apperley Bridge, West Yorkshire, BD10 0NR
enquiries@woodhousegrove.co.uk

I am Grovian.



Woodhouse Grove School is part of the Methodist Independent Schools Trust.
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who are very clear that, whatever our plan looks like, it must be manageable, practical and with the safety of our pupils and staff being of the utmost importance.

At this stage, no one can say for certain that a 01 June re-opening will come to fruition. All this hinges on scientific evidence, which is due to be reviewed on 28 May, and the successful roll-out of a workable system for testing, tracking and isolating new COVID-19 cases. The Government has said that if at this time the evidence does not support a date of 01 June for the wider opening of schools, then the timetable will be delayed. If we get the green light, members of the school's Leadership Team will meet with Governors, via video conference, on 29 May to get their final sign-off for a wider opening of Brontë on 02 June, preceded by an important staff training day on 01 June. If we manage to stick to the proposed timetable, plans to provide some face-to-face contact with students in Year 10 and Year 12 will be unveiled after Half Term.

In the second half of term, we will continue to innovate, develop and refine our remote learning provision for all of our year groups. It has been heartening to witness the excellent engagement of our young people from across the age ranges. The quality and creativity on display, from students and staff alike, has been hugely impressive.

I know many of you will have questions but I ask you to be patient for a little longer and allow us to work through how we can increase the number of children and young people returning to school, whilst adhering to social distancing restrictions and balancing the safety of staff and children, alongside reducing anxiety levels for you as parents and carers.

These are challenging times for all of us and we appreciate how difficult it is for all our families.

Thank you in advance for your continued support.

Yours sincerely

James Lockwood MA
Headmaster

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