



Monday, 18 May 2020

Dear Parents and Carers

### *Staggered Reopening of Schools in England*

Following the Prime Minister's statement last Sunday, there has been a great deal of information circulated regarding the eventual reopening of schools. It appears logical and reasonable for secondary schools to begin that process with those students for whom the impact of the national school closures is the most pressing, which is why we broadly welcome the emphasis on beginning that process with Year 10 and Year 12 students.

It is clear that the reopening of all schools will be in carefully monitored stages. Furthermore, each school will have to design its own detailed plan, given their individual characteristics; including things like the proportion of children who rely on public transport or the number of vulnerable children, regardless of age, for whom the reopening of schools is even more urgent.

I hope you will not be surprised (and perhaps you will be reassured) that how and when we reopen is not a decision that is taken in isolation or hastily. On behalf of the Leadership Team and the Governing Body, I work alongside headteachers within The River Learning Trust to share ideas, plans and solutions. Furthermore, I am also very mindful and respectful of my colleagues' unions and professional associations - whose guidance is at the forefront of my mind.

Meanwhile, I am also very conscious that any plan that evolves will rely on your confidence that it combines practical ease alongside addressing all of your health and safety concerns or worries as well. As much as we all want to get back to normal and kick start our familiar curriculum programmes, the safety and wellbeing of every student and every member of staff remains paramount and the focus of every single decision.

I feel I ought to be clear that it is sensible to begin preparing ourselves for the possibility that this virus will continue to affect our local, national and global communities for some time and therefore an assumption that 'everything will be back to normal in September' is unwise (and yet this is what we currently plan to deliver). Whereas the closure of schools was undertaken virtually overnight, their reopening will not be quite as simple. We have to ready our minds for not only a gradual phased reopening but also some temporary or partial retreats if the local or national infection rate were to rise, or if the number of teachers available to run classes were to fall to impractical levels. We must remember that those 14 day household self-isolations will continue for some time and may greatly affect our staff and student attendance / absence rates in the autumn term.

*Continued...*

With all of these factors in mind, our reopening plan will be elastic and not concrete. Our plan will have to accommodate teaching and learning that is affected by higher than normal levels of student and staff absence. In addition, teaching and learning will have to be better protected from the risks of further, temporary or partial closures.

Whilst we work on that plan, we all need to challenge our mind-sets about the future. Everything from class sizes, site movement and physical proximity, to transport, break times and toilet access, has to be reconsidered and redesigned in each school for the foreseeable future. The way that we teach and the way students learn was already undergoing something of a revolution at CNS and now it is time to accelerate those transformations. Rather than be fearful of the changes imposed on us, let us embrace them and see where it takes us with newfound purpose.

Please do not think that this letter is me on 'transmit' mode. I cannot overstate how much the success of our reopening strategy relies upon *your* backing. In order to flip to 'receive mode' I ask that you take part in this survey on behalf of all the children in your home that attend CNS (or will join us in September).

You can access the survey by [clicking this link](#) or copying this address into your browser:

[https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSff8xUPB8lqhveOFV2Rr3RMoBHsrHHrb8taT0O28\\_f\\_FS7rJQ/viewform?usp=sf\\_link](https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSff8xUPB8lqhveOFV2Rr3RMoBHsrHHrb8taT0O28_f_FS7rJQ/viewform?usp=sf_link)

The survey will take less than 5 minutes and will be of enormous value to us, if a very large proportion of families take part. The questions relate to public transport, use of the canteen, access to technology at home, consideration of us introducing Chromebooks and a free text option at the end. Your answers will help shape the direction of our thinking and planning.

It is my intention that the questions you generate at the end of the survey will form part of a new frequently asked questions (FAQ) feature on our website. I anticipate that a 'Reopening FAQ' button will appear after half term and will update daily, as and when new questions arrive.

**The survey will close on Sunday 24 May 2020.**

It is very likely that as the weeks progress we may ask you to complete more surveys so that we can remain confident that our thinking runs parallel to your own feelings and other practical considerations. We shall try to make the surveys short and snappy.

**I shall write to you all again on Monday 1 June and aim to set out the initial planning for the potential reopening of our school for Year 10 and Year 12 students in the first instance, whilst looking ahead to the return of all other year groups.**

We want to reassure you that we are not going to be pressuring anyone to return to work or send their children to school. We respect that this is an individual decision reflecting personal circumstances.

In the meantime, our school remains open for vulnerable pupils and the children of essential workers. [A Level bridging courses](#) for our internal and external Year 11 students began today, with our Year 9s due to commence their GCSE courses after half term. Life does go on, albeit adapted. Much like our biologists tell us, evolution is rooted in adapting to our environment as it is - and not always as we would choose it to be.

### *Staffing Updates*

Regretfully, I share the news that Mrs Josie Evans (SENCo) will be leaving us at the end of August. Whilst she has agreed to remain as our Exam Access Arrangements Assessor (and therefore keeping in touch with key students and staff) it is a big loss for our school. However, I am pleased to inform you that Mrs Wendy Smart (current Assistant SENCo) will take over from Mrs Evans from September. She will be joined by Mrs Claire Saxby, who will become our new Assistant SENCo.

### *Year 6 into Transition*

This week, Mrs Faulkner (Head of Year 7) and I will be writing to all of our Year 6 students, parents and carers, so that we may set out our amended transition plans. Whilst we are sad that we cannot run the traditional school based events, we have decided to replace them with a series of formal (and not so formal) introductory videos so the children and families can get to know us and learn a thing or two about who we are and what makes us tick. Please look out for a new 'Year 6 Transition' button on our website in the coming days - and if you are in need of some entertainment then why not watch one or two of our online pen portraits that will gradually appear in the coming weeks?

### *Do you have any underused or unneeded devices?*

I wish to draw your attention to a project that has been established to source local devices that can be distributed to those currently isolated or hospitalised during the pandemic.

The iComms Project was founded in late March by a CNS parent; organising donations of iPads and tablets to intensive care units in hospitals all over the UK. These devices are allowing patients in hospital to communicate with their families back home, at a time when visiting is impossible during the coronavirus pandemic. They are also allowing NHS staff to update families on the condition of patients. In some tragic cases, these devices allow patients to speak to their loved ones for the last time and say goodbye.

They would love to hear from businesses and organisations that may have iPads or similar devices, perhaps outdated old stock, that they would be willing to donate. They are also currently fundraising to continue their work.

Their website is at [iComms4ICUs.org](http://iComms4ICUs.org), which details their story and their fundraising page can be [found by clicking here](#). Please spread the word of another amazing local organisation that has made us proud to be associated with this community.

### *And finally...*

I am sorry this letter is such a bumper edition but hope you understand why it is necessary this week. If possible, please find 5-10 minutes to complete [the survey](#) and don't forget that you can email me directly if you wish ([head.4010@chipping-norton.oxon.sch.uk](mailto:head.4010@chipping-norton.oxon.sch.uk)) at any time.

Please look out for the normal updates on Wednesday, Thursday and (Feel Good) Friday.

Yours sincerely



Barry Doherty  
Headteacher

