



'Believe you can'

Tuesday May 12th, 2020

Dear parents and carers,

Asalaamalaykum!

I pray that you and your families are safe and well and are enjoying the blessings of the special month of Ramadhan - despite the most peculiar of circumstances due to the lockdown!

In the first instance, I would like to express my immense gratitude to our parents and school staff for their efforts and forbearance during this difficult time.

Being a parent or a teacher is not easy at the best of times - but to combine the two roles together - as is the case currently for both our staff and parents is a great challenge due to the fact that many of you are teaching / working from home whilst having to take care of your families. May Allah subhanahu wa-ta'ala bless your efforts with goodness and grant you ease in your circumstances, Ameen.

Similarly, I would like to express my gratitude to our pupils - many of whom have maintained the daily timetable of learning we had set for them at the start of the lockdown. InshaAllah, our home-learning arrangements will continue as arranged and all up to date information will continue to be provided on the school website: <http://www.theolivetreeprimary.com/home-learning.html>

On a sad note, it was heartbreaking to receive notification on the 6th of May about the loss of one of our parents due to coronavirus.

"Inna lillahi wa inna ilayhi raajioon"
(From Allah we come and to Him we must return.)

Naturally, the loss of any family / community member is deeply upsetting, but in the case of this particular father, he provided both challenge and support in order to secure the best outcomes for his lovely children. I ask that you join us in praying that Allah subhanahu wa-ta'ala grants him refuge in the grave, admittance to Paradise (without reckoning) and grants his family the strength and patience to come to terms with the loss of their loved one. Ameen.

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In terms of the Government's recent announcement regarding the potential return of Reception, Year 1 and Year 6 pupils from the 1st of June onwards, my Senior Leadership Team and I have reviewed the complex and often contradictory information in order to conduct a detailed risk assessment and to formulate an action plan that aims to enable pupils to return to school safely - whilst also maintaining the safety and wellbeing of staff.

At present the Government has advised schools to reduce the risk of infection by ensuring staff and pupils adhere to a series of measures, which include:

- avoiding contact with anyone with symptoms
- frequent hand cleaning and good respiratory hygiene practices
- regular cleaning of settings
- minimising contact and mixing

They have also advised primary schools, such as ours, that:

- classes should normally be split in half, with no more than 15 pupils per small group and one teacher (and, if needed, a teaching assistant).
- If there are any shortages of teachers, then teaching assistants can be allocated to lead a group, working under the direction of a teacher.
- Vulnerable children and children of critical workers in other year groups should also be split into small groups of no more than 15.
- Desks should be spaced as far apart as possible.

As you can imagine, the challenges of ensuring such a workable model are immense - and we do not wish to take a gamble with the lives of our staff or pupils under any circumstance.

As part of our planning we are also reviewing the vulnerability of staff members and pupils - in line with the three categories proposed by the Government, namely:

- **Vulnerable people (non-clinical)** - Those who are 'vulnerable' due to non-clinical factors, such as children at risk of violence or with special education needs and / or victims of domestic abuse;
- **Clinically vulnerable people** - People considered to be at higher risk of severe illness from COVID-19. This category of people includes the following: people aged 70 or older, people with liver disease, people with diabetes, pregnant women and others. People in this category are advised to stay at home as much as possible. If they do go out, they must take particular care to minimise contact with others outside their household.
- **Clinically extremely vulnerable people** - People defined on medical grounds as clinically extremely vulnerable, meaning they are at the greatest risk of severe illness. This group includes solid organ transplant recipients, people receiving chemotherapy, renal dialysis patients and others. Persons in this category are to

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follow the Government's 'shielding' guidance by staying at home at all times and avoiding all non-essential face-to-face contact.

(This guidance is in place until the end of June.)

Given the many challenges posed by the Government's proposal, we are therefore exploring a range of options - including the possible implementation of a reduced timetable as without this, we consider it to be virtually impossible to ensure adequate social distancing for all concerned.

To help with our planning, we intend to issue a parental questionnaire for parents of pupils in Reception, Year 1 and year 6 by the end of the week. We will be very grateful if parents can complete this by Monday 18th May.

In the meantime, our main source of information sharing will continue to be through the school website, as not all of our parents use Twitter, Dojo or even email. Of course, should you have any queries about your child's learning, you are very welcome to communicate with your child's class teacher(s) via Class Dojo.

Should you have any urgent queries about your child's learning or welfare in the meantime, please contact our office on 07904 555690.

With thanks for your patience and ongoing support,



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