



6th July 2020

Dear Parents/Carers,

Moving Forward – Next Steps – September 2020 Foundation Stage 1

Following our letter to the school community on 29th June we are grateful for the many responses received. On sharing our preferred plan for Autumn 2020, it has been made very clear to us that parents share our sense of what the most positive return for their children in September would look like. As a result we have been working relentlessly to explore options available to us that will allow children returning to school to spend the first Autumn half term within their existing classroom, with their current teacher and adults.

In spite of the significant financial and practical resources being directed to the support of this decision, having undertaken a thorough exploration of all possible alternatives available to us, it is regretful that we are not in a position to begin the transition process into the Foundation Stage that we would feel that your child needs and would best benefit them, during the first half of the Autumn Term 2020.

We firmly believe that our transition processes for children entering the Foundation Stage are critical to their integration and developing sense of place and comfort within the unit, as well as being part of the school as a whole. This would typically see a number of steps taking place. These allow children to work in small groups in a quiet setting that is not overwhelming. This is important for your child as they enter and learn how to access resources in a new unfamiliar space. These steps are:-

- Visiting the setting in operation with you ahead of a September, January or April start;
- Following the start of the term having the opportunity to visit the setting for growing lengths of time, initially with you alongside;
- Increasing your child's independent time in the setting for full sessions when the time was judged to be right for everyone – child and parent. This is always a tailored process which flexes based upon individual children's needs.

Our decision to support the return of our existing school community in September to their previous classroom environment and previous teacher for the first half of the Autumn Term, means that we are unable to offer your child a Foundation Stage setting with a small number of children. It is this that provides the capacity for our individual, child centred and low-intensity approach that we feel is critical for your child's transition. During the first half of the Autumn Term the setting will be used by children currently in Reception (Foundation 2) and those children who are due to move into Reception as our new starters in September. This means that we will be inviting your child back into the setting following the half term break, once the current Reception have moved onto their Year 1 classroom – a time when the setting will provide the necessary opportunities outlined above for your child's successful transition.

We recognise this will be a compromise on your part, and on the face of it for your child's Foundation Stage experience - we apologise that we have not been able to find an alternative solution. However we are clear that to squeeze such critical experiences into the provision as it will stand in September, will undermine the opportunity for successful transition for each child. This in turn will impact on their sense of self, as well as their chances to achieve their full potential, so much more than joining us 7 weeks late to start their long and hopefully successful school 'career' with us.

We are also of course grateful to you along with the wider school community, for your support in enabling us to manage the return to school and development of children in this way. Be assured that throughout their time with us, your child will always be afforded the same level of consideration and

care at all times, particularly should we be faced with similar unprecedented circumstances in the future.

For many of you with children at the school already, we would be keen for this period to be seen as having the potential to offer your child time with you, without the distraction of siblings which we know you will have been managing over recent months. More broadly we will be keen to keep in touch with everyone through a range of regular activities during the weeks of the first half term, ahead of a second half term focussed upon the individual transition needs of your child.

So what will engagement with School/Nursery (F1) look like during first half of the Autumn Term?

We will be keen to develop our relationships with you and your child during this period, in preparation for their transition into the Foundation Stage from the second half of the Autumn Term. With this in mind we are keen to offer the experiences below which will be tailored to meet the needs of children and parents attending. As a starting point these will comprise:-

- Weekly Forest School sessions led by Emily Breakwell, Foundation Stage Practitioner & Qualified Forest School Practitioner & Sarah Butler, Foundation Stage Leader – to be held within the Forest School area of the school site.
- Regular sessions using Sherbourne Developmental Movement (SDM) led by Miss Butler to take place in the Haytor View hall. SDM is an inclusive and fun approach to teaching and working with movement in way that supports children feeling at home with their own bodies and in forming relationships.

In light of the school-wide approach highlighted earlier in this letter the school is seeking to invest in resourcing the Foundation Stage during this period, it is our hope that should capacity be available we may be able to extend and broaden experiences being offered to your child. At the present time we cannot be sure of the level of commitment that we can make in this respect, but be assured that we will seek to increase the frequency and availability of experiences should this become possible.

What will the second half of term look like?

Organised with you ahead of the Autumn Half Term break we will be keen to begin a range of experiences supporting your child's transition into the Foundation Stage setting. Once again opportunities will be tailored to meet children's and parents' needs and will focus upon time in the Foundation Stage setting, initially with parents alongside where appropriate, moving towards children spending sessions in the setting independently.

What next?

We understand that this letter presents a lot to take in, within a landscape where at the moment much seems to be changing around us. With this in mind we will give you a call over the coming days to clarify arrangements in place and allow you to talk through anything that might be on your mind. We would be grateful for any time that you feel able to give us as we continue to plan the way forward for your child, alongside those whose journey with us is already underway.

Following this chat we will write to you ahead of the summer break providing you with more details of what we will bring you during the first half of the Autumn Term. Of course, should you wish, please feel free to get in touch with us at any time as this may be a more comfortable and convenient option for you.

Yours sincerely

Katy Galling
Head of Learning and Development

Niema Bohrayba
Chair of Governing Board