



14<sup>th</sup> May 2020

Dear Parents and Carers,

I hope that you, your children and extended families are keeping well during the continuing lockdown. Furthermore, I trust that you have heard by now, the announcement made by the Prime Minister on Sunday evening or you will have heard about the content through social media and the press.

### **The Prime Minister's announcement in relation to schools**

In essence, what the Prime Minister has said is that the government would very much like it if schools could open to increasing numbers of children from 01 June 2020. However, the government has not confirmed that this will happen yet, because the decision to do so will be made if, the five key tests set by the government, justify the changes at the time.

The five key tests stated in Sunday's announcement are:

- We must protect our NHS.
- We must see sustained falls in the death rate.
- We must see sustained and considerable falls in the rate of infection.
- We must sort out our challenges in getting enough PPE to the people who need it, and yes, it is a global problem but we must fix it.
- And last, we must make sure that any measures we take do not force the reproduction rate of the disease - the R - back up over one, so that we have the kind of exponential growth we were facing a few weeks ago.

For many of us, Sunday's announcement raised more questions than it answered. If you want to revisit the content of the speech, you can read it here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/pm-address-to-the-nation-on-coronavirus-10-may-2020>

### **Government's intent**

Essentially, what we have learned since Sunday night is that if schools open to more children, it will be on a phased basis, prioritising the children in Nursery, Reception, Year 1 and Year 6 first. Yesterday the government indicated that they would like to see all primary school year groups back in school for at least a month before the end of the school year. They have however made it clear that families who choose not to send their children back in to school, with the exception of families deemed to be vulnerable, will not be fined for non-attendance at this time, and schools and colleges will not be held to account for attendance levels.

### **What does this mean for Old Church**

The only thing we know with certainty is that there will be no big changes between now and the 01 June. Between now and the 01 June, in addition to the government's monitoring of the five key tests, the following will need to happen in order for a final decision for Old Church Nursery School to be reached:

1. The government will continue to engage in talks with each of the teaching and support staff unions regarding the conditions for children and staff's safe return to the work place. For the moment, the unions are seeking scientific evidence to reassure their members that it is safe for them to return. Unions will need to be supportive of the children's return to school if we are to be able to staff our school safely.

2. Key staff and I will undertake a detailed **risk assessment**, informed by the extensive guidance issued by the Department of Education and Public Health England, in partnership with other Island Schools and the Local Authority. To do this we will also seek to learn from the experience of countries like Denmark who are a few weeks ahead of us.

The outcome of this risk assessment will need to be discussed with governors and have their approval.

We will carefully consider how we can put the guidance issued into practice, how we can manage social distancing with young children for example and what systems we need to keep our children, staff and families safe.

You can access the guidance here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/actions-for-educational-and-childcare-settings-to-prepare-for-wider-opening-from-1-june-2020/actions-for-education-and-childcare-settings-to-prepare-for-wider-opening-from-1-june-2020>

Please rest assured that we will not start to re-open to more children until we are sure that we have the right systems in place and we can do it in a way that is safe for your children and our staff.

### How you can help us

To inform our risk assessment and decision-making, it would be really useful if you could provide me with the following information.

*If, following completion of the above actions, **Old Church is able to** announce that it will be able to open to increasing numbers of children from 1st June 2020, are you:*

- Likely to send your child back to school before the end of the summer term;***
- Unlikely to send your child back to school before the end of the summer term.***

Please either text me with this information to **07545697360** or email either **admin@oldchurch.towerhamlets.sch.uk** or **head@Oldchurch.towerhamlets.sch.uk** by **5pm on Thursday 21<sup>st</sup> May**. With less than two weeks between now and half term, the turn around to make a decision is very tight.

This is not binding feedback, but to have some indication of likely numbers will be a big help to us.

### Head Teacher

Over the next two weeks, I will seek to keep you informed of how the national situation and our school data are emerging to inform your planning at home.

If you have any questions or need any support, do get in touch and we will do our best to help.

Stay safe and best wishes to all of you,

**Sarah**

Sarah Helm  
Head Teacher