



Dear Parents and Carers,

We thank you for the patience and support that you have shown as we have gathered the necessary information around the potential wider reopening of our school from 1st June. We are also very appreciative of the steps you have taken to keep your children, families and our staff safe since our closure on March 20th. Your children have done us all proud in the way they have adapted to a very different way of life. I am sure that you would also agree that staff have continued to do an amazing job providing childcare, keeping the building clean and safe, providing online learning activities, doing drop offs and deliveries, not to mention sorting out the free school meals' vouchers! We also appreciate the exceptional work of parents and carers, balancing home schooling, their own work and keeping the situation as positive as possible.

Over the last couple of weeks, we have consulted with Durham County Council and the Diocese to consider all risks to pupils, families and staff if a wider reopening of school was to go ahead.

Durham County Council have been very clear that the decision for schools to extend provision for certain groups must be a local one and relevant to a particular setting. They have said that schools 'should only start a phased reopening when they feel it is safe to do so'.

Any reopening of school to wider groups would need to take into account the size of the school building, the capacity of classrooms, availability of staff, potential numbers of pupils accessing the site, access to relevant scientific information, local circumstances and the mental and physical well-being of pupils and staff. As you are aware, we are a small school and space is an issue under normal circumstances. In the COVID - 19 response, our building leaves us with many issues.

Therefore, St Pius X RCVA Primary will continue to provide childcare for some children under the keyworker or vulnerable children criteria from 1st June. We have made the decision to continue to provide childcare for our original group of pupils from the 1st June, as we are closed over half term. **We are then opening a second room for another group of identified keyworkers' children from 2nd June.** This will allow us to take a gradual, sensible and safe approach to expanding our pupil

numbers. Further keyworkers have booked their children in for the following week and are providing school with the relevant information to secure a place.

Governors will then meet on 4th June to consider all aspects of the risk assessment and any future changes to provision taking into account any new advice, updates on staffing availability, government and local authority guidance. **We cannot confirm at this stage whether we will be in a position to then accept pupils from Reception, Year 1 or Year 6.** Until we are clear about the final numbers of childcare places required, we are unable to predict how many spaces would then be available for additional pupils, if it is indeed safe to allow more pupils to attend.

You will appreciate that the safety of pupils and staff lies at the heart of any decisions we make, and will be required to make in the future. All parents and carers of children attending the new childcare group will be issued with a guide outlining the safety procedures put in place from 2nd June. This will include details for safely dropping off and collecting children. Please be aware that there will be no offer of wrap around care. School will only be open to care for children between normal working hours. This is to allow for the additional preparation and cleaning routines that will be put in place to keep children, families and staff safe.

It is important that we prepare children for the changes they will see in school from the 2nd June. Classrooms and the hall will be set up very differently and children will be in mixed age childcare groups. They will not necessarily be in their classroom or with their own teacher. However, we assure you that staff will continue to support and encourage your child in every way possible to make this different experience a happy, safe and enjoyable one.

Once again, we thank you for your support. We want to reassure parents that alternative transition arrangements will be put into place for the successful transition of our Year 6 pupils to secondary school. We will also be in touch with parents who have children starting with us in September to ensure we work towards warmly welcoming these new pupils and families into our school.

We would like to wish you all a lovely half term. We do hope that you get the opportunity to enjoy some sunshine and have a well-earned rest.

Look after yourselves and your families

Mrs Cruise and